

This issue of SKYLARK is dedicated to the memory of

Robert E. Nichols, Jr.

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Collecting The Years

From past engagements and canceled meetings we carry our baggage some more than others handled by all in very different fashions loosely dropping the good as we pick up the bad with fists clinched tight we walk into the weeks ahead with the usual turmoil nipping at our heels

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Anniversary

It's that day of remembrance of fresh flowers drawn from the garden placed on a silver platter given to me while still in bed It's that day of special memories of a tight white dress and what was underneath of spanking black tuxes not quite fitting right It's my anniversary who cares which one my special hours with my love come tonight amidst vanilla fragrance and a hot bath My anniversary for my special day is a special time unto itself

-Kathleen L. Neebe Aliso Viejo, California

TABLE OF CONTENTS

James Yackel, Chancellor's Message	4
By Invitation	6
Poetry and Prose	28
Zapotec Woman	61-66
Anniversaries	84
Young Writers	100
Index	120

For Robert E. Nichols, Jr.

(Inside back cover)





Photo courtesy of Purdue University Calumet

SKYLARK IS 25 YEARS OLD!

or most magazines of its kind, that is more than a lifetime. Yet, *Skylark* appears to be as fresh and as energetic as are the current contributors to this Silver Anniversary edition. For *Skylark* has always suffered under the happy onus of youthful, new, and yet-to-be-fully-fledged ideas about writing, about people, and about life.

A major strength of *Skylark* over its twenty-five-year history has been its diversity. It has presented a diversity of ideas, styles, artwork, authors, and artists. It has truly reflected the diversity of the northwest Indiana community from which it took its beginning. It has also reflected the wit, wisdom, and sense of quality and quality control of its seasoned and veteran advisor, Professor Charles Tinkham.

et us salute this silver anniversary edition of *Skylark*, and its longtime advisor. It and he represent the best of and by our students, our community, and our Purdue Calumet.

JAMES YACKEL
Chancellor

Skylark's 25th Anniversary

e are heirs of the millennia from humanity's cultured past.
Wherever there has been a pursuit of the fragrance of roses or the perfection of equations, there is Heritage, whether ancient or lineage or recent of discovery.



s recipients of history's largesse, we must salute our progenitors, we practitioners under the banner of roses and stars.

We bear the torch of enlightenment, as well as stares and scorn of immured ignorance.





oday's people of good will so cherish these values that they will sacrifice hearth and fire, capital and savings, comfort and well-being—that the general good be served. They are today's noblemen, today's aristocrats of the soul, whatever their daily walk may be, for there is no other aristocracy. Skylark welcomes their legacy as monuments to art.

—Henry White Crown Point, Indiana

B Y Illustration by Dale Fleming

BRO

(for Jimmy)

by Tom Ewart

met him one night in a neighborhood dive, one of those no-frills dumps on the wrong side of town. He was in the middle of a set when I came in, so I parked myself at a table front and center. Over a shot of Jack and a bottle of Bud, I settled in and watched him work.

He sat on a bare wooden chair, hunched over his guitar. His left hand grabbed a fistful of chords, while his right hand scythed with a firm yet delicate flail against the chaff of the strings. One skinny leg anchored his axe to his chest, while the foot of the other pistoned with a thump against the hardwood floor. He turned his head to one side, like a chameleon hiding out as he sized up his inner demons. When he sang, he closed his eyes, squeezing them tightly shut, and wailed into a mike off his right shoulder.

His voice was a blue moon in a starless sky; it was rye whiskey in a cold night alley. Scratchy and hoarse from too many Camels, it was deep, so that it climbed out running as it landed, and ripped into the guts at the heart of the song. It was perfect for the tunes he did, stuff by the Eagles; America; Neil Young; and Crosby, Stills, and Nash.

He was working his way through *Helpless* as I grooved in my seat. The chords he played were strong and simple, and he had a catchy, off-center approach to the music. Once through a chunk of lyrics, he would hum a lead where a mouth harp might play one over his rhythm. He was very good at what he did.

On his break, I approached him at the bar. "Your stuff sounds great, man, really tight."

He took my hand firmly, as if it were the home chord in his strange progression, and pumped it. "Thanks, Bro. You play, man?"

"Yeah, some lead, fills on the tails, comp for others, you know."

"Great! I'm getting lonesome up there; you got an axe here, Bro?"

"Yeah; as a matter of fact, it's out in the car.

But I've got no amp."

"No problem, Bro. Plug into the PA system. It'll put you into the house, and we can mix you through the monitor for us." He pointed to the speakers on their poles and to a small cabinet on the floor near his chair.

I went and got my guitar, a cheap imitation Strat. Drawing up a chair on the small corner stage, I plugged in. Together we fiddled with knobs, setting tones and levels, and then we set sail from there.

e, I like to dance around the frets, scratch and sniff, wail and riff. It's what I do instead of singing; if you heard me, you'd know why. That night

we clicked from the start. I'd accompany him while he sang, adding little fills at his pauses in the lyrics. Then I'd spin out a lead, something off the top of my head. When I slid out, he'd hop back in with one of his hummed lines, all the time staying rock solid on his big acoustic. I'd pick up his idea in harmony, and we'd travel the steps of the chord progression together, like Dickie and Duane on a midnight ride. Near the end of the set, I noticed we were breathing together, one voice through two speakers.

We went on like that for two years, every Sunday afternoon, kicked back at his place or sometimes mine. His wife, Nina, made tortillas, while we drank and smoked and did our thing. Every so often we went public at the bar, but mostly we did it for ourselves. I'd never felt so in tune with someone else in my life.

Then he went South, to break new ground at a friend's camp in a Florida swamp land, and he ran afoul of the law big time, something to do with sex and drugs but no rock 'n' roll. He wound up serving eight of fifteen years in Rahway, claiming all along he was framed. We wrote each other a lot, about a little of this and mostly that.

One night about a year into his sentence,

Nina dropped by my place. She was splitting for her home in the oil fields of west Texas. In tow, she carried a big belly and a redneck she'd met at the bar, some guy in a flannel shirt and alligator boots. Opening my door, she thrust the big Martin D-28 acoustic into my hands. "Here, this baby's yours now, I guess; no one else knows him like you do."

My newly adopted child needed a handle, something like B.B.'s *Lucille*. Well, what else *could* I call him? I named him *Bro*.

After he got out, my man bummed around Boca Raton, hanging with a social worker he'd met in a sex-offenders' program. They got married, and then he stopped writing or calling, and for all I know he disappeared back into the swamp. But I've still got *Bro*. A barrel-chested son of a gun, he's a shot and a beer with dark mahogany sides and a fine barley top. He's got a clear presence and an even balance, something between the snarl of a cornered dog and the aching sweetness of a dove.

ven now, I often take him down from the shelf, sit on the couch, and cradle him in my arms. We moon together over our fate. I remember one tune we did every night: Cocker's With A Little Help From My Friends. He'd shut his eyes, twist his face off to one side, and begin to sing, a hoarse frog's croak gaining strength:

What would you do if I sang out of tune; would you stand up and walk out on me?

No, Bro, I wouldn't do that to you. It's hard enough as it is to find someone to breathe easy with. Just c'mon home, man; I miss your hum in my inner ear.

Tom Ewart lives in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Created for the 25th anniversary issue of SKYLARK, this section is a collection of recent work by past contributors.





A Garden Glows

My backyard is growing bars of gold, elbowing the broccoli and the rhubarb,

outshining banana peppers and summer squash. I wanted some for snacking,

but the bars were much too hard to chew. The last time I watered them,

they gleamed back at me, the sprinkler spray whistling,

branding them possessively, certain of their future worth.

Oh, Gold, let me stand here and savor your potential,

you heavy treasure, you jeweler's joy. Soon you will be packed in styrofoam

and shipped for shaping.

Mag Mile matrons

will simper over your ripeness, caring little for your roots.

I'm the one who'll grab you when your time comes.

I'll separate you from all your field mates, Gold.

So think about your lot in life—all the soft throats,

pulsing wrists, and fleshy ear lobes you'd be privy to —

if only you'd grow up!

—Sandra Goldsmith Chicago, Illinois

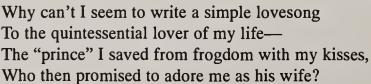


Leprechauns

I wonder if it's really true That way deep in the night, Leprechauns are busy Painting flowers bright And are they in the country Fluffing up the wheat, And plumping up the apples To make them extra sweet It must be quite a number Of the little folk and like, Spending time at riverbeds Shining fins on pike What energetic workers, They purple-tint the grapes, Dress the tiny shamrocks In their emerald-colored capes They must sleep in the daytime As they're always out of sight, Resting in their niches Until they work again at night.

> ---Virginia Borman Grimmer Schererville, Indiana

Shakespeare, You're All Wet!



Love is not what Shakespeare promised in his sonnets, So, I try to grab the "gusto" when it knocks; But, when I beseech, "Oh, wherefore art thou, Romeo?" Romeo tosses me his dirty socks!

Minus balconies, our "castle" boasts a ladder, There I perch with outstretched arms and blushing cheeks; Whereupon my "prince" just tosses up a squeegie, And cautions, "Don't forget, dear, Windex streaks!"

What were you thinking, Shakespeare, with such folly, As to promise love would come from one sweet kiss? You knew that "prince" would start to croak at midnight, And belching would be his idea of bliss!

—Beverley Topa Crown Point, Indiana



SEND IN MAISY

by Judith Lee Birch

Photo courtesy of the author



hen the ringmaster bellows, "Send in the clowns," you can bet your balloons Maisy The Bag Lady will be among them.

In red and white clown face and matching bandana, Maisy struts, wiggles and dances, playing the crowd.

"Who needs a hug?" she'll shout, and grandfathers as well as grandchildren respond. In fact, at one performance an elderly gentleman approached Maisy and said, "If you'd dress this way every day, I'd propose."

Waggling her white-gloved fingers, the brim of her floppy hat bobs merrily as Maisy cracks jokes, dances the hokey-pokey and hugs adoring children.

At hospitals, fund raisers and schools, Maisy is proof positive that laughter is still the best medicine.



While Maisy and her swirling, brightly-patched skirt are a magical sight, it's Maisy's creator, 81-year-old Sylvia Columbus, who is truly amazing. Sylvia was born in Chicago one week before Christmas in 1914. This pre-Christmas bundle, delivered by a midwife, soon became known as the family tomboy. "I always loved to clown around," says Sylvia.

Yet, there was little time for making merry in the first half of Sylvia's adult life. With the death of her husband, William Topercer, in 1957, Sylvia began working in various Chicago savings and loans in order to put a son and a daughter through college.

In later years, Sylvia held a long-treasured dream of surprising her beloved third husband, Charles Columbus, professor emeritus of Manufacturing Technology at Purdue Calumet, by earning a degree from Purdue's Clown College. However, Sylvia finally attained her degree in 1982, two years after her husband's death.

An intricate thread of Purdue experience continues to weave its way through Sylvia's life.

Her son, Bill E. Topercer, graduated from Purdue Lafayette in 1961. Her son-in-law, John Mybeck, served as registrar and Dean of Continuing Education during the '80's. Currently her grandson, John Mybeck, is an assistant director of the Lafayette-based John Purdue Club, and her grandson Matthew Mybeck is a junior at Purdue Lafayette.

Sylvia's creation of Maisy was influenced by her long-time adoration of Carol Burnett's scrub-lady character. "I believe I may have been the first bag lady in Indiana."



With a heart as large as her mile-wide grin, Sylvia loves children enough to continually offer both her own and Maisy's services. For the past 18 years Sylvia, as herself, has volunteered once each week at the Northwest Indiana Cooperative in Crown Point, assisting special-education children with their swimming. The staff at the Cooperative refers to Sylvia as *special*, and honored her with its rarely-bestowed Second Mile Award in 1986.

Going the second mile is standard procedure for this energetic senior. Even two partial-hip replacements have not slowed her spirit of giving. "Every time I feel sorry for myself, I think of those worse off than I am, and I go to the hospital and visit them."

As Maisy, Sylvia regularly lifts the spirits of children, the sick and the elderly at St. James Hospital in Chicago Heights, Illinois.

Maisy's antics have given a boost to countless charitable functions. These include the Northwest Indiana Special Olympics, Hands Across America, events for the Northwest Indiana Cooperative, various functions at Chicago's Hines Hospital and Red Nose Day, the annual fund drive for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.



A member of Calumet Clowns, Clown Guild of Chicago and the World Clown Association, Sylvia tied for the prestigious Joey Award from Calumet Clowns in 1992. Other accommodations include several from Very Special Arts, an organization which supports arts for the disabled.

Her clowning around has resulted in friendships around the globe. She currently corresponds with clown friends in England, Japan and throughout the United States.

Determined not to let arthritis, hip problems and age steal her fun, she has recently consented to ride the floats rather than walk the parades she adores.

Having fun and making people happy remain Sylvia's prime focuses. She admits to sometimes feeling tired. "When I start putting on clown face, Sylvia is forgotten."

Will this five-foot-tall, 81-year-old, funpacked dynamo ever retire? "No," says Sylvia. "I want to die in clown face...still clowning around."

Judith Lee Birch lives in Merrillville, Indiana.

Wisdom of the Earth

Outside my aunt's room, someone else's bungalow shuts out memory, plywood windows with pink roses

afloat in grey; white leaves, buds in a wash of pearl blue. She asks my brother

if he visits whoever lives there. In bed, she wears ruby lipstick, the smell of wax

still warm where she smeared it. Knees bent, arms folded at her breasts, she rocks

against the headboard, Brancusi's wise woman who knows the Earth knows her,

that nothing grows beneath great trees.

Not the first time I watch shadows ease across the face of someone I love,

until light darkens so I cannot see beyond that curtained chamber. Here,

the present, by layers, drifts away, a divine trick.

Waiting, I stand facing my brother whose name she calls but sees

my father, her brother, the child she raised and buried too soon. My hands

feel like no one she has ever seen; wonders who I am, then decides that I

have come for her, that she has always known my dark eyes; that I, Martha, would be

the one to take her home.

—Martha Modena Vertreace Chicago, Illinois

Migration

Driving down Broadway, I look for the white ducks in the pond by the mortuary; Pristine, serene, they glide like sentinels in a fairy-tale world

Today the air is crisp-edged, and the mottled wild ducks, flying South, mingle uninvited, ruffling feathers, making waves, upsetting family values in the fairy-tale world

—Sally S. Nalbor Crown Point, Indiana

Amber Autumn Leaves

Amber autumn leaves flicker wildly in the wind like Sunday's candles.

—Lisa A. Pennington Munster, Indiana

Rebecca 1852—1874

your song of youth has long been silenced another autumn takes the breath of your memory across the countrysidedry leaves scatter over the shadow of your name a spirit carved in stone— Rebecca, I leave you on the hillside a phantom of the landscape never knowing the wake of your smile

—Donna Strabavy Whiting, Indiana

The Taste Of Going

The glamour of the sun on old porch posts—I wonder why the moment seems so lost?

Long shadows follow summer into time.

The taste of going is the taste of wine.

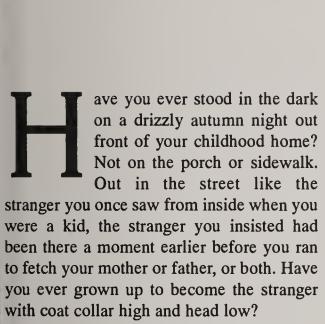
How intricate to trace rhythmic moves
Into the deepening dusk of old lost loves.
West has become the circle of its suns.
Friend, light itself will see the patterns home.

—Sandra Fowler
West Columbia, West Virginia

SLOPE-CEILINGED

ROOM

by Michael Beres



He stands there now, an inside-out man in a leather coat—skin of an animal—looking in, wondering why Cinders is not at the window barking, wondering why the livingroom light is already out even though it is only ten and they should be watching the news, keeping up with world events instead of playing this nightly rehearsal for death. He has parked his car across the street, not wanting to drive up the hump of the driveway, flash headlights at the living-room window, thump tires on the depression where the sidewalk crosses, awaken Cinders. Yes, Cinders is not at the window because Cinders listens for cars that come up the drive or for car doors that slam, out at the curb, or for newspapers that slide across the stoop. Parking across the street has fooled Cinders, and now, when he rings the doorbell—if he rings the doorbell—all hell will break loose, Cinders running through the house, sliding on the throw rug across the tiled vestibule, crashing like a base runner into a front door that has suddenly appeared on the field of play.



Photo by hap

wo decades earlier, during long afternoons between his having arrived home from school and his father's arrival from work, Middle-Eastern terrorists threatening to take over the neighborhood had cowered outside this same door, hiding behind bushes and trees. At the same time, at the living-room window adjacent to the door, was poised a brave little boy named Jeffrey who would turn the tide with his GI Joe automatic weapon. A decade earlier, on other autumn nights, he and his leather-jacketed friends had loitered here, leaning against big-block-powered behemoths with raised rear ends and hood scoops. A halfdecade earlier, on another drizzly autumn night, he and Julie had parked here, petting and French kissing, then Julie re-applying lipstick using a battery-powered, lighted compact while he combed his hair in preparation for the introduction of his "steady" to parents who must have guessed that, tucked into a corner of his wallet, was the condom that would be used later under the auspices of the Surgeon General.

ow, as he stands in the rain with the smell of his wet leather coat lifting across his face, he feels as he had after the first time he and Julie had done it. He feels as if he should do something to prove that he did not mean to become, for that brief instant, the animal that he is. He feels that he should be tender. But here, alone in the street in the drizzle, there is no way to be tender.

As he makes his way up the driveway, he recalls a plywood skateboard ramp against which Joe Smetana leaned while the paramedics attached the temporary leg cast. As

he turns onto the sidewalk that leads to the front steps, he recalls the post-skateboard teenage years and, especially, bouncing a tennis ball off the steps for what seemed an entire summer. As he stands on the stoop, he looks up toward the two dormers sticking out of the roof of the Cape Cod like frog's eyes and remembers the time when, a few weeks before their marriage, he and Julie, along with Cinders, spent the night up there while his parents were away on vacation.

e takes his hands from the pockets of his leather coat, brushes at the shoulders of it to remove droplets of drizzle. The motion reminds him of a tuxedo, a wedding morning, his mother brushing the shoulders while he stands at the vestibule mirror.

The plastic surrounding the door chime button is illuminated in dull orange. The button itself is missing, the corroded copper spring of the movable contact exposed. He thinks of electrocution but knows that the current supplied to the door chime circuit comes through a step-down transformer. He pushes on the spring and hears the double chime, but he does not hear Cinders and this worries him.

In the kitchen Mom makes tea without asking if he or Dad wants it. The "Jeffrey, what are you doing out alone on a night like this?" and the "Where's Julie?" have already been asked and answered. She is alone back in the apartment. He has walked out. And so, with aging Cinders lying heavily against his ankle beneath the table, hot tea is served as it has always been served whenever Mom decides that tragedy-sorrow-grief are at hand. The last time they drank tea together at night at this table, his grandfather—Dad's father had died. Julie had been here then. They had been married a year. And now, two years later, tea again, warming him as he clutches the cup and bends over it.

Dad—hair disheveled, eyes red, robe blue—turns toward the hallway. "Cinders?"

"He's under the table," says Mom.

"Oh," says Dad, leaning to look.

Mom puts out a plate of oatmeal cookies— Jeffrey's favorite—and he realizes how serious Mom considers the situation. She sits opposite him, her back to the fridge. His back is to the wall while Dad's is to the hallway, and he realizes that the three of them are sitting in the same positions they have always occupied at the kitchen table.

Mom's hair is brushed straight, grey hairs longer than black ones. She is wearing a red terry-cloth robe with padded shoulders. She stirs a half-packet of artificial sweetener into her tea—folding the packet to save the rest—and tests its sweetness. Then she puts down the spoon, takes several sips of tea, stares across at him, smiles forlornly.



"I never thought it would come to this, Jeffrey. And especially so close to your anniversary."

"It has, Mom."

"How did it start?"

"A trivial thing as usual."

"You've argued before?"

"Yes, but never as violently as tonight."
She raises her eyebrows. "Violent?"

"I meant to describe the extent of our argu-

ment, Mom. We didn't come to blows."

"What was the trivial thing that started it?"
"The charge-card bill."

"Yes, that does seem trivial."

"Apparently we both charged a few things that the other didn't count on. That new leather coat of mine was one thing. I'd forgotten how expensive the damn thing was until the bill came in. She brought it up after

I complained about a few hundred dollars for clothes and the round-trip ticket for her sister to fly out and visit us. She said I bought the coat to get even."

"Did you?"

"I'm not sure. I guess in a way I wanted it, but now I'm not sure."

"Did you tell her that?"

"No. I said I'd always wanted a leather coat."

"You lied."

"Yes, I lied. We've both been lying."

"In what way?"

"We've both been telling one another and ourselves that everything will work out fine eventually when, in reality, we've got separate friends, separate interests."

True to his character, Dad breaks in with a statement meant to shock. "Lying dog." But immediately afterward, he qualifies it. "Cinders has been lying around a lot lately. I think he's near the end. Thirteen years old next month."

"Your attempt at a double entendre comes late and fails as usual," says Mom, shaking her head. Then, looking back at him, she says, "Jeffrey, separate friends and separate interests have saved a lot of marriages."

"I know, but we've only been married two years. At this stage, aren't we supposed to be sharing things with one another?"

"I suppose so."

"Good, you finally agree with something."
Mom stares at him. Tea, oatmeal cookies, a late-night discussion—all the earmarks of confession and humility.

"Sorry," he says.

"It's all right," she says. "Sleep on it tonight. Try to remember if you gave enough slack or if your pride got in the way. Maybe you'll feel differently in the morning."

Dad stands up suddenly. "Damn!"

"What is it?" asks Mom.

"I should have opened the heating registers upstairs. You'll be able to see your breath up there."

nd so, after scratching Cinders' ears for a while and kissing Mom goodnight, he follows Dad up to his slopeceilinged, boyhood room to

open registers, to get bed linen out of the cedar chest, to make the bed. As Dad helps him with the fitted sheet, he realizes he and Dad have never done this before and it makes the night even more surreal. On his way down the stairs, Dad says he will leave

the stairway door open so more heat will come up the stairwell.

"What about Cinders?"

"Don't worry," shouts Dad from the first floor. "He doesn't climb stairs any more."

efore going to bed he stands at one of the dormer windows looking down. He imagines himself standing down there an hour earlier, an animal skin draped over him. He would have been unrecognizable because the only light comes from the street-light on the corner. He would have been the stranger he had insisted as a kid had been out there to his parents.

He turns back into the room. To fit into the long, slope-ceilinged room with its short knee walls, everything except the bed is miniaturized. Desk, dresser, bookcase—all of them homemade by Dad out of pine poards left over from the finishing of this attic room. He feels as if he has just taken one of Alice's "Eat Me" pills, as if both sides of the sloping ceiling are descending.

He strips to his underwear and gets into ped. He turns out the lamp, and now, finally, with the light out, he thinks of Julie. Not Julie kissing him open-mouthed in the car put front, not Julie in bed—in this very ped—with him and Cinders, but Julie back at the apartment spitting nickels because she is so angry at him.

"You're right, Jeff! I love the coat! It nakes you look so sexy! And in a pinch, if ou're ever with that girl from the office igain, you can always cut off a few strands and make her a harness or something so you wo can get it off!"

"That's an idiotic thing to say!"

"Why? You're always talking about her as f she's some kind of femme fatale!"

"Bullshit!"

"Not bullshit, Jeff! Every other day you're elling me about her latest leather miniskirt or bracelet or boots and how she's lured yet nother of your innocent co-workers to her air!"

"It's just office gossip!"

"Not when I get all these damn hints!"

"What hints?"

"Catalogs open to negligees, hurrying me long when we're going out so I don't have ime to put on a bra, making me watch those nane X-rated videos! Face it, Jeff! I'm not a

damn exhibitionist!"

"Maybe I just want to demonstrate my damn love for you by showing you off to the rest of the world once in a while!"

"Maybe you never grew up!"

As he lies in bed trying to see if the sloping ceiling has moved lower, he remembers how, at that moment of the argument, he had held up the back of his hand to her. He had not lied to his mother, there had been no blows. But he had held up his hand and now, against the black ceiling, he can see Julie's face, that look of utter disgust before she turned and left him standing alone in the living room with the phone ringing and her cheery voice on the answering machine saying to whoever had called, "Hi. We're not here right now, but if you leave your name and number"—

He hears a noise in the stairwell, a sound like fingers drumming on a hard surface. He gets up, goes to the top of the stairs and turns on the stairwell light.

Cinders is at the bottom, front paws up on the first step. He goes to Cinders, tiptoeing down the stairs which crackle from lack of use. At the bottom, he sees Dad standing in the hallway, also in his underwear.

"Should I take Cinders up with me?"

"No," says Dad. "If he tries to come down he'll fall. He's fallen down the back porch steps several times. Luckily it isn't a full flight like these."

He stands there for a moment looking down at Cinders' forlorn brown eyes, eyes which say, I'll do anything you ask and require very little in return.

Dad bends into the shaft of light from the stairwell and picks up Cinders. "Is it warm enough up there?"

"Yes, it's fine."

"Can I close the door now so he won't try to climb?"

"Sure."

efore the door closes, Dad says, "Goodnight," but he cannot see Dad's eyes in the dark hallway. And he cannot see Cinders' eyes. The final image he remembers is the pear-shaped white spot on Cinders' belly and the white, triangular shape of Dad's briefs sagging below his belly.

Back upstairs he turns on the lamp. He can find nothing to read in the bookcase except his grammar-school textbooks but remembers that years earlier, he had hidden men's magazines behind the trap door in the knee wall. He slides the bookcase quietly to the side and opens the trap door. This space, shaped like a triangular prism, has a familiar odor, the smells of dust and construction trapped decades earlier. He gropes beneath the fiberglass insulation between two joists. He finds four magazines and shakes the insulation and dust from them. He closes the trap door and gets back into bed.

He looks at the photographs in all of the magazines, wondering where the models are now, twenty years later. He begins reading one of those first-person articles—supposedly true—about a husband who gets "turnedon" when his wife is admired or touched in any way by other men. The article is long and drawn out and ends with the husband revealing a final "turn-on."

It seems he not only has encouraged his wife to not only let other men see her in intimate ways, but has finally convinced her to have encounters with other men. His only condition is that she not remove visible, tactile or olfactory evidence of said encounters.

The description of the husband's obsession with "evidence of another man's spoor on his turf" is disgusting. Jeffrey closes the magazine and drops it to the floor with the others. He shuts off the light and closes his eyes, trying to remember what he thought of the filthy story when he was a boy.

He remembers imagining that he has grown up and that the woman from the story was





his wife. He remembers imagining further that this so-called "wife willing to do anything for her husband" was in this very room. It had been an elegant, slope-ceilinged loft apartment then. His wife had arrived home with the evidence of lovemaking as requested. Wordlessly, she did anything he asked and required very little in return. Based on the distorted imaginings of an adolescent, his picture of a dream wife was complete. Yes, the men's magazines—and even movies and television—had conjured up a great hoax aimed at his youthfulness-that hoax being that the perfect wife should be like a family dog willing to live out its life in total devotion to its owners.

He thinks of Julie, sees once again the look in her eyes at the moment he raised his hand. Although her movements, her sneer, her turning-her-back-on-him had suggested defiance, the look in her eyes at that instant was one of fear.

He turns over on his stomach, hugs the lumpy pillow the way he hugged it so many times in the past when it momentarily became a woman from a men's magazine. He grips the pillow tightly with the hand that had been raised, and weeps.

* * *

In the morning when he goes downstairs,

the kitchen is empty even though he had heard kitchen sounds earlier. He remembers Mom telling him recently that she sometimes sleeps late and lets Dad get himself off to work. He goes into the bathroom and washes his hands and face and combs his hair. As he does this, he is aware of the stinging of several unseen filaments of fiberglass insulation imbedded in his fingertips.

Back in the kitchen he looks out the window and sees that the day is sunny. A movement in the yard draws him closer to the window. Dad is out in the yard with Cinders. At first he thinks Dad is playing with the dog, stooping down to give Cinders a whiff of a ball he will then throw across the yard for him to fetch. But then he sees that Cinders is defecating while Dad—his hands beneath the dog's belly—hold him up.

"He can't stand for long periods, especially in the morning."

Jeffrey turns and sees Mom's hair cowlicked from sleep, her eyes tired. She yawns and goes to the sink where she begins filling the coffee pot while looking out the window.

"If your father doesn't hold him up, he messes himself. We discussed having him put away, but your father says he doesn't mind helping him. Are you going to work from here?"

"Yes."

"And Julie?"

"I'll call her from work and we'll go from there."

"Oatmeal and fruit okay?"

"Sure."

In the car on the way to work, he cannot get his mind off the image of his father holding Cinders up in the yard. It seems the most touching thing he has ever seen. It blocks out many other images and remembrances he had had during the previous night in the slope-ceilinged room of his youth. He decides that when he gets to work and calls Julie he will tell her about his father and Cinders and about the crazy lies he told his mother when she asked about their argu-

At a stoplight he unbuckles his seatbelt and struggles to remove his leather coat because the sun is out and it is much warmer than the previous day. He gets the coat off, throws it into the back seat and re-fastens his seatbelt just as the light goes green.

Michael Beres lives in Tinley Park, Illinois.

One Sunday, One Summer

Together. The whole family. We went to ten o'clock Mass. Little Boosey fanned me with a holy card: Our Lady of Brezje, pray for us.

Then, after Gramma's roast, Gramp told his only stories: how his father had stared down a wolf; about the bear that ate the baker's wife.

All afternoon, the "boys" talked politics out on the patio. The children picked wild berries at the edges of Gramp's acre.

I wandered round the house with ghostly breezes till I paused beside a wall of photographs, those faces saying: Please remember me.

Outside at dusk, my boy ran laughing past me and across the lawn, escaping curfews. (Even now, his laugh is in the air I breathe, a Muse.)

Late. We watched a movie—Alan Ladd? I was a part of chilly sisterly exchanges ending finally with a truce. No, Bogart. Or—

At two a.m., a half-moon simmered on my window sill like half an answer.

The way you turn this page, we turned that day.

—Joan Peternel Hampton Bays, New York

August Afternoon

Thelma wore a shawl and rocked on the two crescents of her chair, while the cat sprawled out like an old fur piece in front of the screen door.

Henry lay on the back-porch swing, reading a tabloid from the Piggly-Wiggly:

Woman Mistakes Gluestick for Deodorant—
Can't Take Off Dress for Ten Days...

The photo said it all.

Billy stayed in his room upstairs with a mayonnaise jar of fireflies from Sunday night, their uninspired habitat having drained their batteries, and on the wall next to the open window, hung a picture of the family together in the snow one Christmas, the gray and icy river behind them contradicting the present, passionate buzz of cicadas outside.

—John Bolinger Hammond, Indiana



Illustration by Marianne Mitchell

NURSING HOME JOURNAL OCTOBER 18, 1995

by Margie Palm

A t 7:30 Jodi, the night nurse, wakens me to get me ready for the day—bath, shampoo, etc. When dressed, I am rolled down the hall to breakfast. I try to move my leg, but can't. I whisper, "Stroke, be damned!"

We pass a young boy's room. His name is Charles. He sits on his bed screaming, having reached the point of no return from stroke to sanity. The noise shocks my body, and I jump.

This place, I think, is more like a psych ward than a nursing home.

As we approach the main dining-room, an 80-year-old resident shouts, "Damn you, damn you!," and throws a stuffed animal at me.

After breakfast, I go to activities, and work on a clay bust of Dr. Martin Luther King. I glance out the window at the spacious lawn. Outside it is peaceful and quiet.

A lot of the patients are incoherent, and live in the past. One night, as I was watching TV, an old lady came into my room crying. "What's the matter?" I asked.

"Tell my mama to stop hitting me," she said.

* * *

but there are Chris and Lena, the dancing couple, each 85 or older, who, every time there is music in the dining-room, dance till it's over.

There's Myrq, who scoots around in her wheelchair, carrying coffee and cups to people, greeting folks, and offering help and advice. She keeps the rec room neat and supplied with fresh coffee, and she makes the name designs that go up new on the residents' doors every month.

I've had three roommates so far: Anna, sharp and with it, zipping around in her electric wheelchair, whose children and grandchildren visit her often; Carrie, age 94, still running her wheelchair herself, not very talkative, but always friendly and glad to see me; and now Rosie, age 97, so bent over I've never seen her full face, never speaking, often moaning, but usually silent.

We laugh, we cry, we scream; we doze, we pray, we hope. We help and are helped. But sometimes we have to wait too long.

These two pieces are the work of two long-time area residents—Margie Palm and John Sheehan. Margie has written some very compelling essays about her birthplace and her childhood in the South—a series of prose poems called 10 STEERS LANE. John has written poems depicting his political activities and thoughts, especially his wide ranging sympathies for the disadvantaged, over the past thirty years. He published his first book of poems, ELSEWHERE, INDIANA, three years ago.

Last year Margie suffered a stroke—and has spent some time in a nursing home. John has moved from Gary to Portage so that he can be closer to her. As you will notice, these events have not defeated them but have made their work even more telling.



LEAVING GARY

by John Sheehan

never thought I'd be moving to Portage. But I never thought Margie would have a stroke, nor that my arthritis would get so bad. So, I'm in this apartment without any steps, a mile down the road from the nursing home, where I visit Margie every day.

But leaving Gary—

feel like I'm betraying Gary. I came to identify so much with her: this ill-conceived, steel-mill mismatched city; this scapegoat of our confused society; this city I taught in nineteen years, and six more part time; this city where students and people accepted me as one of them; this blessed place where I could vent my anger in creative ways; where Black folk respected my anger as their own (some students once told me, "Mr. Sheehan, when you get mad you sound Black"); this city where I met and loved Ollie, and after she died, got to know and love Margie; this city where I'm known and greeted wherever I go; this city I've loved even more than Chicago; Gary to live in, Chicago to visit; this enchanted place where 1906 and after have not completely destroyed the woods and swamps and dunes of centuries; this Potawatomie crossing grounds; this polluted heaven by a hidden lake (but on Clark Road on the west and on Woodlake on the east I never smelled the pollution).

The Mandolin

Why should the nude who is far from thin Have propped up in her bedroom, against the wall, The admonishment of the bulbous mandolin?

It stands there like an ancient pear gone to wood.

The long neck that strains for light and music

Says: I, too, have been so long neglected, misunderstood.

The woman's body played upon until she grew stout?—Did lovers fondle breasts until they hung like fruit And love's luxurious corpus bottomed out?

Likewise, did the special hand that played the instrument, Some dark, lean, seignoirial man of many parts, Plucking at her nerves, lose, somehow, his passion and intent?

So the pear shapes speak of broken hearts— Perhaps something, out there in the world, gone to seed: Rooms bare of love, deserted by the arts.

We go on stretching fingers, straining necks, Hear the music fade, feel the heavy weight descending, And know what art demands, and love expects.

—Charles Edward Eaton Chapel Hill, North Carolina

When I Turned Thirteen

Were you there that day when the THING happened? There were no disturbing reiterations, no forebodings, no elfin warnings or dissonant chirpings, and no gnomes. Yet I watched for the THING when I turned thirteen. Screech owls were perched like blasphemous preachers, their horns feather-tufted, their black vestments puffed, as they hooted their requiems to gods of the forest, and shy swampland creatures awakened and summoned the birds to watch in the safety of cattails where the water was smooth and blackly lacquered, where I watched for the THING when I turned thirteen. When it came, that inevitable THING crackled like footsteps on twigs, and I listened and watched for it to come shadowless, chanting a dirge. Did it mean only to walk on the water? Of course! Then, what ruffled the water with downward plunge, a spider web spreading over bubbles bursting? What smoothed the surface too fast that day over what I expected? Were you there? Did you see it. the THING that happened when I turned thirteen?

—Olga Grush
Naperville, Illinois

The Problems of Josephine or Is There Safety in Numbers?

Three husbands Josie married, but none of them has tarried. (It was the mumps with Harry, chain cigarettes with Jerry, Scotch with Joe.)
Now they're in the cemetery, in a row.

So Josephine spends hours planting rectangles of flowers. Each grave gets equal deference. She will not show a preference, and she is most perplexed to pick the one she should lie next to when she goes.

But that problem's just a trifle when she contemplates an eyeful of three husbands come to claim her, arms outstretched (and who can blame her?) at the promised pearly portals reserved for proper mortals here below.

Poor Josie then must ponder what is etiquette up yonder. Should she take another mate (Better earlier than late)? Then, as center of a blithesome, equal, heavenly-minded fivesome, off she'd go.

—Agnes Wathall Tatera Chicago, Illinois

Unshackled

Unshackled suddenly from nation, name, definition, dimension I rise blue into blue and fly where the whim blows

—Dona Lu Goldman Highland, Indiana



Sandra Jensen

The Parking Lot Artist

She knelt on the pavement, tools of her task beside her: yardstick, brush, a can of paint . . . parking-lot yellow, highly luminous, primary yellow to catch the eye.

She had finished the "No" and had done the "P-a" of parking, then raised her head and grinned. Her boss stood near and shook his head at her unconventionality.

Her face looked bright and slick, like skin pulled tight across a drum. Her dyed-blonde hair, swept up, had loosened from its hold, and flew to meet the feathered plumes she had fixed on top, white with a red one in the middle.

Her clothes were baggy, pants and top appropriate for painting pavements. She snickered at the state in which we found her, and at herself.

She said her boss had criticized her work.
We complimented her originality in using capitals, then small-case letters.
She turned to him and said, "See? They like it!"

He made no comment, having resigned himself to her uniqueness under some small influence.

She aimed her line and drew out "r" and "k" prattling to herself.

Now sitting flat on the pavement, her legs sprawled aside, she brushed on the splendid high-visibility yellow of joy.

> —Helen May-Wing Hammond, Indiana

Cascade Mountains

All day we walked through the mountains and came to camp before twilight, near the elephant-gray boulders of ten thousand years, primordial forest and the white moon.

And camped not far from the lumber road, trucks crawling up the grade, deep guttural roar, thick diesel smoke, as if a coal train had passed through from the fifties.

My feet rest near the June fire.

It is frosty in the mountains, small stars, each bough of the Douglas firs keeps the light of the fire from the night of the tallest trees.

Past midnight.

No one has come up the road from the city for hours.

Most have fallen asleep
on their sides, knees drawn up high.

My stub pencil from my back pocket—

I can hardly read these last lines,
the darkness covers half the world and into China.

The circle of camp stones grows cold, hands under my head, not sleeping, not reading nor writing, the high mountain air cold.

I fall into sleep, shrinking into the immense darkness of the mountain like a near-by thing—that random twig in the straw grass, that shadowy river-bed stone lying in the open, the river gone.

—Robert P. Cooke Highland, Indiana

Clay Pots ... Exquisite Vases

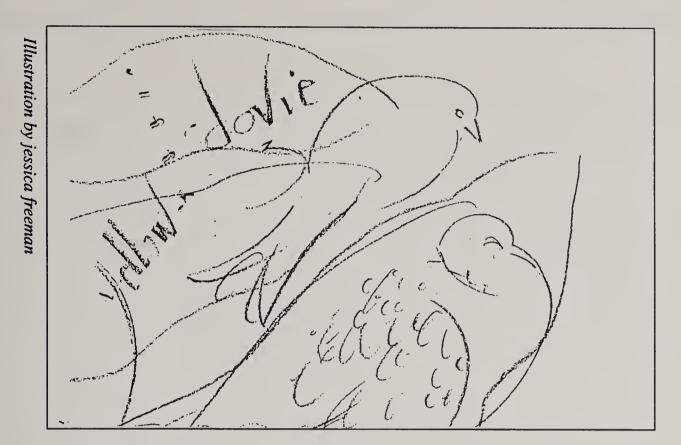
Our creator ... the Master Potter
designs each earthly vessel
reflects upon its utility ... its beauty
bestows a deliberately, defined destiny

For you ... a singular creation

He chose a poet's perennial probe
that, through you, His intricate patterns
might be revealed the poet's way

Therefore ... never apologize
for being a lovely, fragile vase
by His plan ... a work of art
which when filled ... will on occasion
spill over ... with joy or pain

—Evangeline Morse Gary, Indiana



First Anniversary

In Spain they say that a person is never fulfilled until he or she does three things: plants a tree, has a baby and writes a book. After some years in the United States, I planted pines, oaks, maples, birches. . . Thus, my first objective was accomplished before I turned thirty. I had always wanted to be free as a bird, and so never thought of becoming a mother. But suddenly, when I was thirtysomething, we started to dream of becoming parents.

I accomplished my second objective when I had Raquel. Now, twelve months later, on her first anniversary, during a brief break from talcum powder and diapers, I am inspired by the freshness and sweetness of my baby to begin the third objective—to write a book. It would be for Raquel, so she could read the brief pages. She would know what a precious time her mother had that snowy autumn afternoon when she was cradled in my arms for the first time.

Preoccupation and uncertainty. My wings were clipped. Leisure, reading and relaxation were unthinkable. My baby was the boss. But all this disappeared when I felt her secure and peaceful next to me. In the spring I knew that everything would be better. Her honey-colored eyes began to recognize the world and smile. I knew she would feel happy with me for the rest of her life.

Like the grass and wildflowers, Raquel was also growing. That summer, we went to Spain to meet our family. Everyone adored and spoiled her. I showed her where I had spent my younger years—my hometown with its superb monuments, the gothic cathedral, and the Mediterranean Sea. She played in the silver sand and shied away from the salty waves.

When we returned, I felt a great nostalgia for Spain, but Indiana was our home. Here, Raquel took her first steps and said her first word. My baby had changed. She was no longer the girl who had clipped my wings and stolen my sleep. She had helped me know myself and had inspired me to fulfill that final requirement—writing a book.

—Char Prieto
Michigan City, Indiana

THE SPRINKLING SYSTEM

by Cathi Kadow

ou'd think she was inspecting the Crown Jewels the way she had her nose up against that timer box. I couldn't get close enough to read the instruction manual she had clenched tightly in her hands. The timer was one of those combination types: dial and buttons with a digital read-out. At first glance, I thought it would be complicated, but I knew that, given a chance, I could set it.

"You know," I said to Caroline, "I always did things like this when we had our home. I can set the timer, I'm sure. My husband, Ed, is not very handy, and I always had to do the maintenance—unless it was something major, of course." She seemed to be ignoring me.

When we sold our house and moved into the condo, I figured the best thing about the move would be that I wouldn't have to worry about the school kids destroying our hedges or having to chase the teenagers away from the sanitation ditch that ran along the back of our property. What I hadn't thought of was that there would be nothing to do. There was no outside maintenance, and the inside was new, so there was nothing to worry about. With only five rooms, there wasn't even any housework to speak of. The sprinkling system was the only thing that had gone wrong since we moved in four months ago—and that could easily be fixed, if only Caroline would let me set the timer.

What had happened was that the landscaper had installed the sprinkling system's timer inside Caroline's garage instead of outside, which meant that only she had access to it. To make matters worse, she had the only copy of the instruction manual, and she was not letting me take a look at it.

I looked at her; I didn't care if she thought I was staring. I knew she was divorced—twice—Marge said. Marge lived across the hall from Caroline. Caroline was in her early forties, and from the looks of how she was going about setting this timer, she hadn't done anything like it before.

"I'm sure if we reset the clock, we could get the sprinklers to turn on," I told her. "I really was quite handy when we owned our home. In fact, I was so good at doing things like replacing fuses and checking on the sump pump that Ed only had to cut the grass." I didn't care if I sounded smug telling her this. Caroline was staring at the timer, and I wasn't sure if she had heard me.

"Isn't this drought terrible?" I asked her.

"It's a shame the landscaper had to lay the sod now. If we don't get this timer to turn the sprinklers on at our scheduled time, our building could get a ticket. There's notices posted everywhere indicating when we are allowed to water."



She turned toward me, and I thought I saw tears forming in her eyes.

"I don't know why they had to put this in my garage," she cried. "My ex-husband never let me do any of this." She turned towards the time and started pressing the buttons beneath the dial. I was surprised when she went on.

"He used to tell me that if I would get a real job, I would leave him. I kept telling him that I wouldn't. We began to argue so much about it that we actually did get divorced."

I didn't know if she was talking to me or to the timer. I remembered seeing her ex-husband once when he came to pick up his sons. He drove up in a new car—he didn't get out—just pulled up and waited. He was short; his head barely cleared the top of the steering wheel.

"Well, I talked with the builder last week, and he promised to do something about this," Caroline whined again.

"Don't worry, Caroline, they're going to move it out of here. It shouldn't be a burden for too long." I took a step closer to the timer. "All we have to do is"—my words got lost in the slamming of the timer door.

"That should do it," she said.

The sudden noise shocked me for a moment. She had no intention of letting me

set the timer. My feelings were hurt, but I wasn't going to let her know. She moved out of the garage, and I reluctantly followed her, glancing back at the timer as I did.

"Do you have any problems with your condo?" she asked as we stood outside her garage.

"No, nothing other than some minor adjustments." I managed a polite reply in spite of my hurt feelings.

I glanced back at her garage. Boxes were stacked on the back shelf and along the timer wall. An exercise bike with only one wheel lay against the other wall, while empty plastic milk bottles and an electric drill sat on the floor. I wondered how she got her car in there

"I'm having all kinds of problems," she said. "I have cracks in my walls and trouble with the plumbing. If Bob were here, he would take care of it. But I'm going to learn to do these things. He doesn't think I can. I know he doesn't. He asks the boys questions every time he sees them." She mumbled something else under her breath, but I couldn't hear it. I was too busy thinking about her sons.

Yes, she probably did have cracks in her walls. From the way her three sons wrestled around up there with their friends, I'm surprised she had any walls left. Some days I had to go up there and tell them to stop making so much racket. She shouldn't leave them unsupervised while she goes to work. Ed goes golfing, and he doesn't hear them as much as I do.

went inside envisioning a cloud of doom hanging over our building. I knew she didn't set that timer properly. Why, the woman can't set her alarm clock right. She's always running late in the mornings. A couple of times I almost got knocked over by her running down the stairs.

I made a mental note to tell the other building inhabitants about her fumbling with the timer. I wanted to make sure that they knew she had programmed the sprinklers when they didn't work properly.

I decided to rest for a while. I turned on General Hospital and made myself a cup of

tea. Ed was out playing golf and wouldn't be back till later.

When I woke up from my nap, I looked outside to see if the sprinklers had turned on. They hadn't. I waited and waited. Nothing. Caroline was supposed to set the timer for 5:00 p.m. today. She should have let me set the timer when I offered. I could have gotten it to work.



Two days later, I awoke to the sound of water running. I looked at the clock radio next to our bed. It was 3:00 a.m. Ed must have left a faucet running again. I always remind him that he married me so he would have someone to shut off, open up, or pick up after him. It didn't take me long to find out that every faucet was shut. But I still heard water running.

I went to the patio door and brushed the drapes aside. I could see the front sidewalk was wet. The sprinkling system was on. I went back to bed and lay there for a long time thinking about the police car that would cruise by during the night. I could see the officer, standing beneath the street light, writing out a ticket. I drifted off to sleep in a good mood.

The morning weather forecast predicted another hot and windy day with no chance of rain. Our building wasn't scheduled to sprinkle for a couple more days.

"We bought a condo so that I wouldn't have to worry about taking care of the house any more. And I'm not going to worry. I want to spend my retirement without worrying. Why are you working yourself up about the stupid sprinklers?" Ed said to me later that evening. I had made the mistake of bringing up the sprinkler situation again. He never could grasp the whole picture. I always had to point it out to him.

"I'm not working myself up, but after what I told you about, don't you think something should be done?"

Ed shook his head and went back to his TV program.

Later on in the week I saw Caroline fiddling with the timer again. The bedroom windows have a clear view of the parking lot and the garages. Row garages they're called. Since there are six units in our building, there are six connected garages, with Caroline's garage directly in front of our bedroom window.

I was changing the sheets on the bed, so when I heard a garage door open, I looked out the window and saw Caroline heading towards the timer. She began punching the buttons on the timer. I went to the closet and got out the binoculars. Standing behind the curtain, I could see everything quite clearly. She had her hands on her hips while squinting at the dial. I wanted to call out to her, to tell her that I would come down and set it, but I shook my head. I can be as stubborn as she. I'll wait till she calls me to do it for her.

The next day a squad car pulled up in front of our building. I watched the officer get out of his car and write out a ticket. He stopped for a minute, pulled out a white handkerchief from his back pocket and wiped the water from his face. The sprinklers were on, and a shift in the wind had caused water to spray him.



That afternoon I watched Caroline's car. I debated all morning whether or not to tell her about the ticket and had finally decided that she should know about it. Maybe now she would ask me for help. But before I could get outside, I heard Arnold, my neighbor, who is on the condo association's governing board, come storming out his back door and running down the stairs.

I went back into the condo and immediately went to my bedroom window. I picked up the binoculars. The air conditioner was on so I wouldn't be able to hear anything, but I could certainly look. I saw what looked like the ticket in Arnold's hand. I moved away from the window and went into the kitchen to start dinner.

"What are you smiling about?" Ed said.

"Oh, nothing, dear."

I was getting into the car the next morning when I heard Caroline's garage door open. I began to fiddle with the car seat and the rearview mirror. After yesterday, I figured Caroline would ask me to help her set the timer, and I wanted to make sure she had the opportunity to do so. Caroline came out the

back door, her arms filled with plastic bags. She went straight to her garage, to her car, and was gone before I could flag her down.

That evening was our scheduled watering time. Nothing happened. I sat on the balcony with Ed, waving to the people walking along the dry sidewalk in front of our building. I kept smiling. Ed didn't think anything of it. He saw me smiling and moved his chair a little closer to mine.

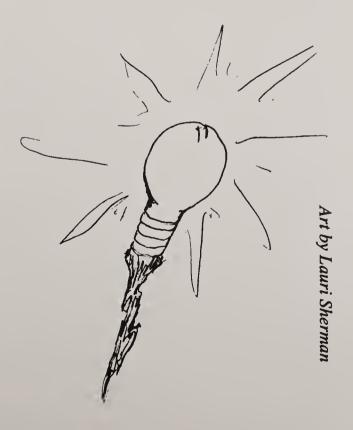
The sound of water running woke me about midnight. I looked out the window and saw the sprinklers on. We received our second ticket the next morning. I watched for Caroline to come home that night. She looked hot and tired, and her hair had frizzled from the humidity. I don't know if Arnold spoke with her, but around 10:00 p.m. I went to throw out the garbage and heard a woman's voice.

"Step 2. Turn dial to right..." I shook my head and went back inside.

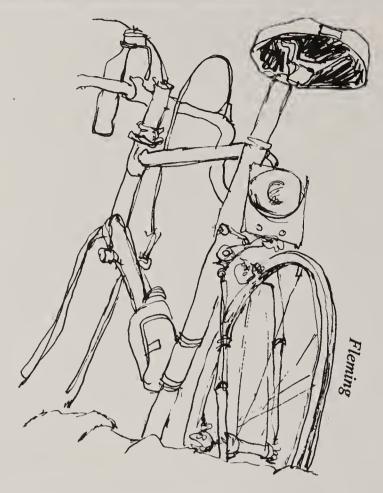
The next evening was our building's turn to water. The sidewalk became wet as the black sprinkling heads popped up from their underground hiding places. Ed let the incident pass with just a few words.

"Oh, good. The sprinklers are working properly," was all he said.

I never mentioned the sprinklers again. I sometimes watch Caroline leave for work. I wonder when she is going to clean out her garage.



Cathi Kadow lives in Tinley Park, Illinois.



The Ravenswood ... MCA

The Y burned out years ago. At night it barely shows, a black wishbone pressed against windless skies. Stiff towels unfold like letters signed love; once each week, the sheets crack like communion wafers.

The door to forty-eight stood agape three days: knotty pine dresser, mirror barely big enough to fit a face, curtains hanging like Hopper's Sunday Morning from inside.

Saturday afternoon, boys wearing names of gods on their feet and backs come dunk & slam, leave glistening with jive as the sun splits three-flats on Ravenswood, slips beneath the viaduct, and glints a diurnal nod.

—Richard Zabransky River Forest, Illinois

You Destroy

My young black brother, my African brother, you're killing me you're killing us you destroy!

You destroy hope, happiness, love, joy, pride—life you destroy!

You destroy fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, you destroy!

My young African brother, why do you kill? Why do you destroy?

What makes you so vain?
Do your eyes not tear?
What makes you so cold,
cold and callous?
Do you not feel the pain
when you kill and destroy!

Where or what happened to values—life and family?
They're still precious, you know, then why do you kill?
Why do you destroy!

Why?

My young African brother.

Why?

—Ken Shannon Gary, Indiana

MY MOTHER AND WILLIE

by Joanne Zimmerman

here was a knock at the door. We knew it was my mother. We used to leave the door unlocked, and she would just walk in, but you can't do that any more, with all the crime and vandalism and all.

I had just put the children to bed, and was tired, so I glanced over at Dave, who was sitting in the leather chair reading the paper, but he didn't move. He didn't like her. He didn't actively dislike her, I don't think, but he didn't like her. He never objected to having her drop in after work every day, but I had to answer the door, hang up her coat, get her a cup of tea and entertain her, while he read the newspaper. It was a kind of deal we made without ever discussing it.

After my father died, she stopped in like that almost every evening. She said it saved on the phone bill. I didn't mind. If we were not at home, the baby-sitter let her come in to see the children, and if the children were with us, we left the door unlocked. It used to be her house. She gave it to us.

She stopped by in the evening after work—she still ran the printing shop my father established. She liked to see the children briefly, and she liked to see what I had been doing. Some evenings she went to meetings. She worked for all the "good" causes in this little town—beautification, zoning, family counselling, a youth center, housing for the elderly.

That was the quarrel Dave had with her. He said she was phony. Well, he didn't say it that strong, but at least, not honest. He says that "zoning" is just another word for "keep out undesirables," which in the case of our town means the blacks who live in the factory town to the south. He said, "Let's see what happens to the housing project for the elderly when the first little old black lady tries to move in. What if Callie tried to move in?"

Now that's a different question. My mother loved Callie. Callie worked for mother for wenty years, all the time I was growing up. You might say that *they* grew up together—ny mother and Callie. Raised their families it the same time, only separately—Callie in ier tiny house, and we ourselves in this big

one. The kitchen is arranged the way Callie arranged it; the perennials come up each summer where she planted them; I follow her recipes.

I thought mother looked well. She's not a pretty woman—tall, bony, with stiff grey hair she could never do anything with. She wore it cut short as long as I can remember. She used to have it cut once a month at Al's Barber Shop, along with all the men. When I was a child, on the day she had her hair cut, I would walk all around the edge of town to get home from school, rather than pass the barber shop and see my mother in the chair in the window, the white cloth around her neck, men waiting their turn, watching her, joking and laughing. When short hair came in style, she went to a beauty parlor, but it never looked any different. If Dave wanted to get me really mad, he called her "Butch"—not to her face. That's ridiculous, of course, because here I am, and she's my mother.

She was in the middle of the room before I could say hello. "Callie called me," she said triumphantly. "I've just come from there."

"Yes? How is she?" I could see that there was something special to report about this visit—joy in her eyes. She rubbed her hands together—not for warmth in this weather—but as though she wanted to get on with some task she relished.

"How are you, David?" she asked, and he said, "Fine," and put the newspaper back in place in front of his face.

Her smile smoothed out the lines across her cheeks. She looked positively youthful when she sat down and explained, "Callie called me. I think it's the first time in all the years—she turned to me for help."

Now this surprised me, because I thought we were always helping Callie. I know that all our outgrown clothing went to Callie for her children. My mother saved the fat from our morning bacon, chicken hearts and gizzards, and all the left-over food we didn't eat, for Callie's table. That's another thing that makes Dave furious to hear about. He says we never gave her anything—nothing but things we didn't want or couldn't use. He says, "Why didn't they raise her pay and let

her buy her own clothing?" But that's ridiculous, too. There never was too much money around, and there were mortgage payments on this house, and then college tuition for my brothers. Dave is living in the house my parents paid for. Sometimes he seems to hate that, too.

But I understand partly—Mother needed Callie, turned to her for help, for advice, for comfort. She confided things she would never have told anyone else. She really loved her, but it was not reciprocated, not in the same way. All the *feeling* was one way, in one direction. Callie never treated her as an equal. She didn't share herself. For example, we never really knew why Big Will left Callie. Mother didn't know Callie's thoughts and dreams as Callie knew every route and byway of hers. So I can see why Mother was so excited when Callie finally asked for help, for guidance.

"What's the trouble?" I asked, after I had poured tea into the cups that had belonged to her mother.

"It's Willie. She's afraid he's getting into serious trouble."

"What kind of trouble?" I asked, although I could have answered before she did—it's so common these days. You read it in the paper every day.

rugs. Girls. He doesn't have a job. He comes to her for money all the time. She told me about it. She wept, and I held her in my arms, and she told me all about it." She shook her head. She tried to pull the corners of her mouth down—I know she felt sorry for Callie—but her cheeks seemed to round up of themselves and pull her lips up into a smile.

"Oh, Willie. That Willie. He's a bad one," I said, but I had not always thought so. Willie had blue eyes, pale blue. In his dark face they shone like heaven's own light. We played together when we were little children, but when we got older, all he liked to do was frighten me. He'd show me a shiny knife, balance it on his long black finger, and then flip it so that it stabbed the dirt next to my toe, and laugh to see me frightened. Sometimes I was only pretending, because

he seemed to like the game so much. When I was fourteen, and we were attending different high schools, I got to going over to his school in the afternoon to find Willie. Somebody told my parents, and I got the one and only beating my father ever gave me, and that was the end of that.

"What did she say?" I asked. "What happened?"

"He threatened her. He came to her for money, and threatened her. She's been giving him money, but she doesn't have any now, and he didn't believe her. She threw him out. She told him never to come back, and now she's in anguish. Her son. Her oldest. Her first-born."

hat's the position I hold in this family, so I think I know what that means. I thought I understood what my mother was saying. "But what can you do?" I asked.

"Oh, I have already set the wheels in motion. First of all, I'll get her and Willie to family counselling. They have to talk this out."

Dave lowered the newspaper a little and said, "I thought you said she kicked him out."

"She did."

"Then how's she going to find him? How's she going to get him to somebody's office at the right time on the right date?"

Mother ignored him. She said to me, "He'll turn up. She'll find him. It's a small town, after all." She continued, "And I talked to Judge Mohr. They have a program for juveniles..."

"Raking leaves," Dave said. "Anyhow, don't they have to be in jail first? To qualify?"

This time Mother looked at him, her coldest look, the one that means, "How can you know anything? You're nothing but a child." She said, "Perhaps we can forestall that. Judge Mohr is my friend. Many's the time he's eaten Callie's cooking, right here in this house, in this dining room, off these very plates."

Dave put the newspaper between them again, because if there's one thing he hates, it is to be reminded of all that. He has said to me, "The house is your inheritance. Let's sell it, and buy a new one some place else." But I couldn't do that to my mother. I have the responsibility of continuing to live here. Especially now.

"And I'm going back there tomorrow. To



Callie's. Right from work. So I probably won't be stopping by. I mean, she needs me now. It's a wonderful feeling. The least I can do is be with her as much as I can."

Now the rest was supplied to me by Callie herself, and by the police, because just about the time Mother stood at our open door saying goodnight, rummaging for her car keys at the bottom of her big leather bag, looking out at the twilight and surmising about tomorrow's weather, the police gave chase to a stolen car weaving down a country road.

illie was high. There was no place to go but on. His answer to the sirens and flashing lights was to press the accelerator to the floor. He fired his revolver out the window for the

He fired his revolver out the window for the noise of it, going a hundred miles an hour. The police replied with fire. One bullet smashed the rear window. Willie's girl clung to him, tried to pull his foot off the accelerator. He pushed her away, hit her with the back of his hand, and she laid her head against the pale blue upholstery and screamed—scream after scream. When they drove into town, some people got a glimpse as the car flashed by—the girl's mouth wide open, her eyes closed, and Willie just laugh-

ing, driving that big car with one hand, having a good time for once. Bystanders ran indoors, closed the windows and bolted the doors.

I guess Mother thought the sirens and commotion were at a safe distance. She dutifully halted at the crossroads in the center of the village, righteously prepared to proceed when the stolen Buick hit, lifted her car high into the air, rolled it through the display window of the corner drugstore where it hissed and sizzled and caught fire.

Willie's girl flew through the air, but landed unbirdlike in a heap, her arms and legs folded the wrong way, like a rag doll discarded by a heedless child. I never even learned her name.

Four police cars screamed to a stop at angles to block a get-away—the combined forces of both villages—but Willie wasn't going any place. Men leaped out, crouched, guns drawn, carefully drew close to Willie, still in the driver's seat, eyes open, and a long drawn-out high-pitched sound coming from his open, bloody mouth.

Joanne Zimmerman lives in Homewood, Illinois.

In April

in april,

summer hovers like mist over ice-free waters

and over all green things,
now rising from the earth
into air come alive
with the flutter of bird wings

in april,

summer is a lilac ghost ripe for resurrection

—Lisa A. Pennington Munster, Indiana

Lying Awake at Noon

I haven't moved an inch.
Below the window a white sulphur cascades to the disk of a yellow daisy, fifteen billion years have passed since the first beginning.
Time and energy are spent everywhere in an odd equation, as mountains disappear in briefest time.

I hear the deep drone of the bumblebees above the white day lilies, filling the air with work and living, their feet yellow with pollen and left deep in the throat of the brightest flowers. When I tilt my head, I can look down the red and yellow borders, the blue cornflowers at the end, rooted and fed with light, at home as exploding stars, as the dull stone facing the sun. It is almost noon and hot summer. I lie in bed with nothing to do, naked, my feet stretched out to the very end, my hands cupped under my head, at home on this warm day, lazy and still.

> —Robert P. Cooke Highland, Indiana

Selena Quintanilla

I will not save the world,
Or you with my poetry.
I will only save my sanity.
Boredom will punish me heartlessly from now on.
Like an exile, in your absence,
I search for a destination.

The sun greets me today
While sparrows sing
In the spring.
I endure the tears,
And the words from my nightmares!!!
As you terminated your life with me...

Symphonies created
By APRIL rains make the bluest skies!!!
Your human tongue, golden,
Like sun and honey sings no more...!!!
My heart seeks refuge
In the deep blue slumbers
Of APRIL...
Forever, I'll be without you Selena Quintanilla...!!!

—Jesus A. Gutierrez East Chicago, Indiana

Bridges

Of all the things that man has made locks, stocks or clocks bikes, boats, cars, planes or trains TV, radio, telephone or computers frozen foods, ice cream bars or Tootsie Rolls tall buildings or short buildings, I prefer bridges!

You see, bridges connect. Land to land hand to hand heart to heart love to love thought to thought life to life.

Yes, bridges connect
Our souls, our worlds, our hopes,
our destinies, our joys, our sorrows.
Bridges connect
the disconnected, the untouched, the unseen.

Of all the things that man has made I prefer bridges.
Bridges of understanding!

—Yahya R. Kamalipour Schererville, Indiana



POETRY

Christine Shrader

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PROSE

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DUBLIN ONE

by Paddy Reid

hy mus I go to school, Ma?"
Kate demanded once more.
"Because I say so." Sara
Gavin said the words slowly, trying hard to remain calm.

"Yeah, but why?" Kate made a face as her mother hurriedly placed a bowl of oatmeal before her. Milk slopped over the rim onto the red formica table. Kate felt cold drops falling onto her bare knee. "I don' wanna go to school, Ma."

"Yer six an a half, Kate. Yeh jus can't stay at home any more, yeh know like?"

Sitting across from Kate, Sara took a few quick sips of lukewarm tea, then began tapping her fingers on the table top. She reached for a cigarette, changed her mind and flicked the packet to the center of the table, where it rested against the sugar bowl. "Lissen to me, love." She stared at Kate, eyes narrow and serious. "Yeh heard wha the welfare officer said las week? Yer well enough now to go to school. The meningitis thing is gone."

"Did yeh have to go to school when yeh were a kid?" Kate asked.

"Yeah. Cos all kids mus go until they're fo'teen. Tha's the law an tha's the why."

"But"-

"Kate. . ." She took a deep breath, reached for the cigarettes and lit one. "Yer goin because school gives yeh a chance, love." She paused, sucking hard on her cigarette. 'Yeh missed a full year when yeh were sick, but now it's time to take every bit of learning yeh can get." Sara smiled briefly. "When yer ig you'll be able to get a good job an all. Maybe a job in an office, typin or somethin ha doesn get yer hands dirty, yeh know ike?"

"But when's tha goin to happen?" Kate sked sourly.

"Soon enough, love. After yeh leave chool." Sara frowned, staring at the smoke urling from her cigarette. "Without some parnin yeh'll end up jus like. . .well, never hind who."

Kate opened her mouth to say something, nen glanced at Sara and thought the better f it. She wanted to tell her that Betty ingleton next door had just gotten a job in Biggs Biscuit Factory down near the docks. Betty was thirteen and she had hardly ever gone to school. She liked Betty because she never let other kids get away with calling Kate's mother a whore and other bad things.

"Eat the toast before it gets cold." Sara cut the toast into four arrow-shaped pieces, just the way Kate liked it.

"Yeh know somethin, Ma?" Kate pushed the half-eaten oatmeal aside and grabbed a slice of toast. She bit into it, then dropped it back on the plate. "Betty Singleton hardly never went to school an she's workin at Biggs."

"Yeah? Doin wha, tell us?" Sara asked in an edgy voice.

"Work," Kate stated simply. "Tha's wha she does."

"Stuffin cakes an biscuits into cardboard boxes all day long is wha she does." Sara said quickly. "Yer goin to do better than Biggs, yeh hear me? Now hurry up an get ready. It's nearly nine. Yeh don'wanna be late on yer first day, d'yeh?"

"I suppose," Kate said absently.

"Can yeh spell school?" Sara asked as she put on Kate's coat. "Do tha word for me."

"No." Kate shook her head. "It's too hard." Her eyes lit up. "Hey! I can spell biscuit now."

"Yeah? Let's hear it," Sara said, kissing Kate's forehead. "Spell biscuit for us?"

"B-I-S-K-T." Kate smiled with satisfaction. "There!"

"Yer a good girl, Kate Gavin." Sara beamed. "You'll do jus great in school."

"Yeah." Kate basked in the warmth of Sara's approval. "I suppose."

* * *

At nine-fifteen on a sunny September morning, Kate gripped her mother's hand tightly and they set off down Portside Lane toward Christ the Wayfarer Primary School. Kate wore her best clothes, a white blouse with navy blue cardigan and yellow cotton skirt. Sara had spent a lot of time fussing, making sure Kate was spotlessly clean. The top of Kate's head felt raw and her scalp tingled from being raked so much with the lice

comb. Kate gingerly touched her head, scrunching her face at the sharp whiff of carbolic soap. She stared down at her black shiny new shoes with the silver buckles and smiled. It was nearly worth all the fuss just to wear those.

"Have yeh got everythin yeh need in yer school bag?"

"Yeah." Kate patted her new bag. "The jotter an pencil case is in here."

The only good thing Kate could think of about having to go to school was carrying such a nice bag. She squeezed it, feeling the hardness of the wooden pencil-case against the soft leather cover. Sara had bought the bag in Hector's Discount Shop. Kate once again opened it to check that everything was in there. It held two orange-colored pencils with erasers attached, a pencil sharpener, and the two remaining crayons left over from a Christmas stocking, one blue the other red. Kate glanced at the jotter. Where it said 'NAME' on the yellow cover, she had written KATE in big curly letters. Then she had put '1964' on the line that said 'YEAR.' The third line, the one that said 'CLASS,' she had left empty. She didn't know what that word was, and Sara hadn't been able to figure it out either.

A woman seated at a table in the hallway of Christ the Wayfarer School smiled at Kate, then looked past her to Sara. "What's the child's name, M'am?"

"Kate—Katherine Gavin."

"Gavin." The woman ran her fingers down a long list of typed names. "And the address?"

"It's 32B Montini Mansions, Portside, Dublin One."

avin?" The woman peered at the sheet of paper, her brownspeckled forehead wrinkling like corrugated paper. "Let me see." She chewed the end of

her pencil, looking puzzled as she muttered some names. "Ganly. . . Gilligan. . . Gunnary. No, I'm sorry." She shook her head slowly, making a sad face. "There's no

Gavin here. Are you sure your girl was registered for this school?"

"Sure I'm sure," Sara said firmly. "I came here back in June to get her all signed up."

"Oh, don't get me wrong, Ma'm." The older woman said quickly, fluttering her hands. "It's just that we don't have her name entered in our roll of new kids." She paused, then smiled. "We have a bit of a problem here. Could you go upstairs to the office? Mrs. Kelly, the headmistress is there. I'm sure she'll sort it all out in no time."

* * *

"You say you signed her up for school in June?" Mrs. Kelly peered out over her bifocals.

cals.
"Yeah, with her!" Sara pointed past the woman's shoulder to a photograph hanging over a filing cabinet. A woman with a shock of white hair was shaking hands with a priest. "She's the one I saw in June. I gave her Kate's name, so I did."

"That's Mrs. Finlay," Mrs. Kelly said, tapping the photo with a bamboo cane. "The photo was taken at her retirement presentation a couple of months ago."

"She's gone?" Sara said in dismay. "Did she say nothin about Kate?"

"I'm afraid not," Mrs. Kelly frowned. "You saw her in this office?"

"No, the office was closed for lunch, so I do ask this woman I met on the stairs." Sara nodded to the photo. "She said she was a teacher an she'd be sure to sign Kate's name into the roll for this autumn. She was leavin the school in a hurry, so I gave her a piece of paper an she put it in her pocket. Kate had written her name out nice an big on it."

"Oh?" Mrs. Kelly eyes narrowed. "The girl wrote it?"

"She did," Sara said proudly. "She's real bright for her age, y'know?"

o it seems." Mrs Kelly curled her lips. "Strange, I'm sure Mrs. Finlay would have mentioned a note. She is—was very good about those things."

"I'm tellin the truth so I am, I swear to God." Sara paused, fingering her blue head-scarf.

"Could yeh contact Mrs. Finlay? She'll know I'm tellin the truth."

"I can't do that. She's in the United States visiting a sister there who is very sick."

"Oh. I see," Sara said in a sad voice. "An she musta forgot about Kate."

"There's nothing I can do." Mrs. Kelly tapped the cane against the side of her leg. "We've already got forty pupils in each of the beginning classes now."

She didn't sound happy about it.

"Then forty one isn such a big deal, is it?" Sara gripped Mrs. Kelly's wrist, then quickly let it go when the woman glared at her. "Lissen, yeh mus let Kate in. Like, it's not her fault, is it?"

"It's too late to start processing her now, M'am. As I said, we're full up for this year."

"I signed her up to go to school here." Sara pointed at the photo. "Jus cos *she* forgot."

"There's no need for that." The head-mistress said coolly, then let out an exasperated sigh. "Strictly speaking, Christ the Wayfarer is in the Dublin Three school district here. Your address is Dublin One. Portside Primary school is in your area. It's closer and it's a"—

"It's a dump!" Sara snorted. "I should know, M'am. I went there myself."

"Look, I'm sorry." Mrs. Kelly's voice hardened. "I'm already late for a staff meeting"—

"I want her to go to this school," Sara insisted. "All she'll learn in Portside is how to climb over the barbed wire wall an get outa there. I want her to learn somethin, yeh know?" Sara pulled Kate close to her, absently stroking the top of her head. "Kate's bright, so she is. She had meningitis las year which kep her outa school." Sara dug into her straw shopping bag and pulled out a white cardboard shoe box. "I have all her papers here if"—

"I can't help you," the headmistress snapped, then looked at her watch. "I must go now." She rose from her chair, moving toward the door.

Sara stayed in her chair. "I'm not leavin here until Kate gets signed up."

"Then you leave me no choice but to have you removed from this building." Mrs. Kelly picked up a phone and asked for the caretaker, her voice low and urgent.

Moments later a man entered the room and Mrs. Kelly whispered something in his ear. She cleared her throat, turning to face Sara. "I ask you one final time. Please leave now."

"Kate was signed up for this school," Sara said calmly, folding her arms tightly and slumping farther into the chair.

The headmistress nodded to the man, who immediately began trying to pull Sara from the chair.

"Take yer hands offa her!" Kate yelled, then ran behind the man and kicked his left ankle.

"Why, you little. . ." He glanced at the headmistress, biting his tongue.

"If he lays a bleedin finger on Kate, I'll get the police!" Sara hissed into Mrs. Kelly's face.

"That's enough, Mick," Mrs. Kelly said sharply. "I believe she is ready to leave now."

The caretaker released Sara.

"Okay." Mrs. Kelly jutted her chin at Sara, "Now you leave or *I'll* call the police."

ara opened her mouth to say something, shook her head and stood up. She walked slowly to the door, holding Kate by the hand. As they moved down the corridor, Kate stared back at Mrs. Kelly and the caretaker, who stood watching with his arms folded.

"Keep yer lousy school!" Kate yelled sticking out her tongue.

"Kate Gavin!" Sara angrily shook her, moving away at a faster pace. "Don make a show of me."

* * *

Outside, Sara sat on the steps of the school, staring into the distance for what seemed a long time.

"Does this mean I don go to school after all?" Kate asked hopefully. "Can we go home now?"

"Not yet," Sara said in a determined voice.
"I have to get yeh signed up somewhere."
She paused. "We're not givin up yet."

They walked back across Ballybough Bridge into Portside.

* * *

"Is this the place I have to go to?" Kate made a face as she gazed at the thick, red brick walls which completely surrounded Portside Primary School. Black sooty streaks ran down the graffiti-covered walls and barbed wire was strung on top, along its whole length. All of the high windows were covered with wire mesh and Kate could no see through the grimy glass. She could make out a word that had been scrawled on the steel doorway that led into the school. It had been painted over in dark green, but the big black letters were still visible. "F...U," she said softly.

"Come on, love, chin up." Sara smiled down at Kate. "In we go." Kate gripped her mother's hand tightly and they walked up the stone steps into a dim hallway.

"When we go in, don dare open yer mouth unless I tell yeh, hear?"

"Okay, Ma."

* * *

Kate saw some girls she knew from the Montini Mansions project, all sitting with their mothers on a long wooden bench placed against one wall. Some she smiled at, others she ignored, mainly because they had always ignored her before. As they walked, Sara patted Kate's hair in place with quick, jerky movements until Kate pulled away.

"My hair is alright, Ma," she complained.

"Here." Sara pointed to an empty seat. "Sit still an be quiet while I go to the office, okay?"

Kate nodded, opening her bag to take out her pencil case. From somewhere down the hallway she heard a whimper, then a fullthroated cry filled the air. "I wanna go hooome!"

"So do I," Kate whispered. "An the sooner the better."

* * *

"I want to sign my girl up for school," Sara told a woman at the office desk.

"Sure." The woman smiled, pen poised over a large black book. "Name and address?"

"Kate Gavin," Sara said quickly. "32B Montini Mansions—jus around the corner."

"Yeah, I know." The woman wrote for a moment, then handed Sara a blue sheet of paper. "Please fill in this form and bring it back to me."

"Wha's this for?" Sara asked, brushing limp hair from her eyes.

"We need to know each child's medical history." She glanced at Sara. "It's the done thing now."

"Oh." Sara suddenly looked worried, reaching into her bag to touch the shoe box. "Anything wrong?" The woman looked into Sara's troubled eyes.

"No." Sara hesitated, holding the form at arm's length. "Except, I can't. . . " She paused, glancing over her shoulder at the silent row of faces seated against the wall ust behind her. Some were busy writing, while others sat in silence, just watching and

listening.

"Yes?" The woman said. "What's the matter?"

"Nothin," Sara replied in a flat voice. "I'll sit down over there."

* * *

Kate smiled when she saw Nan Toomey, a neighbor from the Mansions, sitting nearby. She was filling in a blue form. Kate walked towards her, pulling Sara in that direction.

"Hello, Missus Toomey," Kate said.

"Where's Rachel?"

"Hello," Nan Toomey said. "Rachel is home in bed with a cold. I'm signin her up for school."

Rachel was about Kate's age, and new in the Mansions. Last week Kate had watched as the Toomeys moved into a flat at the end of her block. Afterwards, Rachel had let Kate play with her skipping rope. Other girls had come along and began whispering to Rachel, who left shortly afterwards to go home. She had told Kate to keep the rope, which was real nice of her.

"Tell her I said thanks for the skippin rope," Kate said. "Can we sit here beside yeh?"

"I don know. . ." Nan hesitated, glanced sideways at Sara, then at her black handbag resting on the bench. "There isn very much room here."

"It's okay," Sara said quickly. "There's an empty chair down the hall a bit."

"Don'wanna go all the way down there," Kate said in a pouty tone.

"Well"— Nan Toomey sighed, picked up her bag and placed it on her lap.

"Sit there, Ma," Kate insisted. "An I'll sit down agains the wall."

"Suit yerself," Nan muttered, peering down at her form. "I'm almos done here anyway."

ara simply nodded, then sat down. Both women shifted apart a little, trying to create a space between themselves. Sara then stared at her own form for a few moments, then glanced over at Kate, who was whispering happily to herself as she opened her pencil case and took out her crayons.

"There!" Nan slapped the form with relief. "I'm all done." As she gathered her bag and rose to leave, Sara touched her lightly on the arm.

"Please," Sara said in a tight voice. "This thing..." Her hands shook a little as she held out the sheet of paper. "I'm sorry to bother

yeh." She rushed on, unable to stop now. "But can yeh show me how to fill it in, like?"

"I really mus be goin." Nan frowned. "I'm meetin someone downtown." She held up her own form before Sara's eyes. "See?" She jabbed at it. "Here it asks if yer child had the measles. Yeh jus answer 'yes' or 'no' as yeh go along. It's dead easy."

"Like, I'm not able to. I mean. . ." Sara faltered, glanced up at the woman for a moment, then averted her gaze to the floor. "I don know how to do it, Missus."

omething in Sara's tone caused Kate to look up from her drawing. She had rarely seen her mother looking so sad.

"Oh, I see." Nan Toomey glanced from Kate to Sara and back to Kate. "Ah, well." She eased herself back down on the bench, dropping her handbag at her feet. "Wha's a few more minutes?" She sighed deeply. "Lissen, M'am. I'm not so great at readin either, but. . ." she smiled at Kate, "let's give it a go, eh? D'yeh have a pen? My own one has nearly run dry."

"Kate?" Sara asked, urgency in her voice. Kate slid open her pencil case and picked out a stubby pencil.

"No pen?" The woman asked.

"No." Kate shook her head once, then brightened. "I have a lovely red marker."

"No thanks, child." Nan rummaged in her bag, finally pulling out a biro. "Here we go. Let's hope it has enough ink left."

"I'm sorry to bother yeh with this, Ma'm," Sara said. "It's kind of yeh to help me."

"If it helps Kate," Nan Toomey said a little coolly, brushing Sara's thanks aside. "Let's fill this in."

* * *

"Wha's yer date of birth?" Nan called to Kate, licking the tip of the pencil.

"Uh. . .Nineteen somethin." Kate looked up from her drawing.

"February twenty-first, 1958," Sara said slowly and carefully, in a tone she used when talking to the welfare officer in Pier Street Clinic. "She's jus turned six." As she spoke, she opened the shoe box and began riffling through it. "I have all her papers here, M'am. Her birth cert an all the other"—

"No," Nan cut in. "Don't think they need those. The birth cert should be enough."

ut Sara continued to take out papers. A handful of cream-colored sheets, held in one corner by a long brown hairpin, fell onto the wooden floor. Papers from the time Kate was in the hospital for meningitis, keeping her out of school all of last year. Old prescription forms and a smallpox vaccination card. She gathered and shuffled them into some kind of orderly bundle and then clutched them to her chest. "It's all here. Everthin to do with Kate is in this box, yeh know? They can ask me anthin they want. I don't care." Sara held up the box, rattling it. "It's all here in black an white, isn't it?" She looked at the older woman, her eyes

Kate heard her mother talking rapidly and again looked up from her drawing. She saw fear in her mother's wide eyes and felt uneasy, not knowing what she was afraid of. She had never seen that look before, even when one of the uncles who visited their flat had hit her mother.

"I mus get her into school, yeh see?" Sara said hoarsely. "I can't let them take"—

"Don upset yerself." Nan started to pat Sara's hand, then caught herself. "People do often leave it to the las minute to sign their kids up. They're not too fussy about things here."

"Kate's a good girl. She needs to learn more"—

"I know," Nan said quickly. "It's goin to be fine. They'll take her in here, no bother." She spoke in a soft, singsong voice, as if talking to a child. She paused. "Now, let's get this finished."

* * *

Sara carefully and solemnly answered each question that Nan read off the form. Both heads were bowed together, whispering. Kate glanced around from time to time, but everyone else seemed equally preoccupied, either with their kids or with filling in forms. Kate saw Nan make big, blocky words on the paper.

"Has she had the measles?"

"Yeah, an chicken pox, too," Sara added.

"TB?" A raised eyebrow. "She's a bit too young for tha, surely?"

"Uh. . ." Sara paused, blinking rapidly. "It was in the family." Sara smiled at Kate. "She never had it, but they tested her at the clinic and she's a. . ." Sara searched for a word.

"She has it, like, but it doesn do anthin inside her, yeh know?"

"Yeah, she's only a carrier." Mrs. Toomey nodded. "My sister's child is the very exsame way."

Kate lost interest when both women got to talking about illnesses for a few moments. Kate drew two figures and a bed. A man with a knife standing over a woman lying on the bed. Part of a dream she'd had a few nights ago. All that remained of the dream was voices, then other moaning noises, then the knifeman.

The women got back to filling in the form. "Did Kate ever have epil. . .uh," Mrs. Toomey peered hard at the sheet, mouthing the word slowly, "ep. . .il. . .lep. . .sy. I think it's called epileprosy." She shrugged. "I don' understand this question myself, so I jus answered 'No.'"

"No," Sara echoed. "She's had nothin like tha." She paused, thinking. "D'yeh think it's anthin like the mumps?"

dunno for sure." Nan rubbed the bridge of her nose. "Could be it may have somethin to do with skin rashes an the like, yeh know? But I'm prob'ly wrong in thinkin it has."

"No." Sara shook her head once. "I make sure she washes herself each an every day."

"Tha's it, then. All done." Mrs. Toomey said in a satisfied tone, handing the form back to Sara as she rose from the bench. "Jus hand it in to the office."

"Thanks very much."

"Yer welcome," Nan said, then smiled down at Kate. "Hope yeh learn good in school."

* * *

"You answered all the questions? Good." The woman read the form quickly, then tossed it onto a pile. "It looks fine to me. Bring her in tomorrow to begin classes, okay?"

"Tomorrow?" Sara repeated, clutching the shoe box. "Tha's it? She's in, like?"

"Yes, this is just a sign-up day. Tomorrow starts school proper." She smiled at Kate. "See you then, Miss Gavin, okay?"

"Yeah," Kate said shyly. "See yeh."

* * *

Outside, they both sat on the school steps. Kate picked up a piece of newspaper, spat on it, and began rubbing dirt off her shoes. Sara carefully laid all her papers back in the shoe box, then jammed it into the bottom of her straw bag. Then tears started running down her face.

"Get a grip on yerself, Sara Gavin," she whispered.

"Ma, wha's wrong?" Kate had never seen her mother cry.

'okay, love. Jus dirt in my eyes."

She smiled, raising herself from the steps. "Come on, Kate, let's go home. They'll see. . ." Sara lowered her voice, as if talking to perself. "I'll show them who's a good moth-

herself. "I'll show them who's a good mother. They're not goin to take her away from me."

"Take who, Ma?" Kate asked, glancing down at her shiny shoes.

"Never mind, girl." Sara said quickly, smiling. "It's good to finally have yeh in school."

"I think I like school," Kate said after they walked in silence for a while.

"Yeh do? I'm glad to hear it," Sara said gratefully.

"Yeah, I jus got to sit an draw pictures an then school was all over. It doesn take long."

"No. Not long." Sara laughed and more tears ran down her face.

"Wha's so funny, Ma?" Kate asked. "I don't get it."

"Oh, you'll get it soon enough." Sara wiped her eyes with a corner of her scarf. "Now, let's go to the shop an buy biscuits to have with tea for when we get home. I think yeh earned them."

"Yeah, I love biscuits. Can we get Custard Cream ones? They're my favorites." Kate skipped ahead of Sara, her school bag trailing on the ground behind her. "Ma, d'yeh know I kin spell biscuit?"

"Yeah, I know, love." Sara ruffled her daughter's hair. "I heard yeh do it this mornin, like."

"Will I say it again?" Kate asked, pulling on Sara's sleeve. "Jus to make sure?"

"Why not?" Sara laughed easily. "The more yeh practise words the better yeh remember them."

"Okay, are yeh ready? Here it goes. B-I-S..."

Paddy Reid lives in Dublin, Ireland.

A Mole on a Hot Day

I write poetry for the few
The ones that would rather hear
A mole on a hot day in an Arizona desert
With a sound as quiet as decay

We don't want mangled cars And alabaster on those cars Signifying a desire for speed

And we care even less for torrents
Or frogmen on call
Or blasted ducks on Sunday morning
The smell of them too, that scent
Of burlap, lead and sticky blood

But give us a wisp of wind filtering through hemlock And not on a fall day in Wisconsin But in the middle of a summer day in arid Greece

And in Death Valley right at dusk
Give no hint in your work of rebuff
Do not resort to adding more injury
to our wayward species, please!
If you must do something, lay out
some mirrors in the Badlands,
We don't care how the mirrors are arranged
So long as you don't get epigrammatic

No cling-clanging, rattling insufficient thought
When you were in the kitchen at two
Or how god-damn bright your oldest brother was
And how you had to look past him in the woods because of guilt
History is coming around soon
Give something else a thought

Please give the sound of a mole cruising
The mole will suffice for a denouement
When he's done with his dirt for a while
Done digging his endless grave for a while

Cyrano In Us All

We all see ourselves as ugly in the mirror.

Not fit for sight or sound.

Big nosed, big lipped, too fat or too skinny, we see that in ourselves.

We're the losers, the bungled, the botched, the lost, and the lonely.

We are also the strong, the lovers of life, the dreamers, the poets, the ugly.

Our only beauty comes from within the soul.

We never get the prize. We never get the girl.

The nearest glory we get is sunsets and sunrises.

We keep a little bit of Monsieur de Bergerac in our world.

Our nose to overcome may be color, weight, style or creed.

But outward beauty needs allies, help.

We ugly are alone, but free.

We overcome our sorrow and lack of self-esteem.

Our voices speak wisdom, and love for the dark.

When we leave this world, our mark is left through others.

-Vincent Ortega

We are all, and in all, we are nothing.

We stay in the dark, while others shine in glory:

Christian had the looks.

Moliere had the genius.

We? We have our nose and our panache.



—Louis E. Bourgeois Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Illustration by Martin Shrader

Long Distance

to the muse

she rose
with radiance
like the sun's,
her eyes
deep-sighted
as the curve
of the morning's
vast sea,
and taking me
by the hand
she began
to lead me
through the high
rippling grasses
of the prairie—

butterflies abounded—monarch
and miller
and swallowtail—
the sky
towered blue above us
and great hawks
balanced themselves
on pinions of air—

'What is your name?' I said. 'And where do you take me?'

'My name does not matter,' she said,
'but I take you wherever you desire within the four corners of world.'

and such
was her beauty
to me
that I gave her this name
for no other would do

—Charles B. Tinkham Hammond, Indiana Her white-knuckled grip
on the gray receiver loosens.
Goodbyes have been whispered.
Time to hang up.
End communication.
Quickly, gently descend
to silence,
Submit to the distance
between them—
Distance that renders
vision powerless
to pierce the darkness,
Touch useless
but for the cradling
of the telephone.

—Christine Shrader Gary, Indiana

Doing Without

You don't use salt any more. So I have to do without. Eggless omelettes, tea with honey, Tofu and bean sprouts, Bulgar wheat and skinless chicken.

You don't put salt on anything.

I need a cheeseburger, fry And a chocolate shake. Pepperoni pizza and a beer. B.B.Q. ribs, Potato salad.

You don't put salt on anything.

So tonight...

I'm bringing home Ling Wah's #3 Dinner
For Two!

—Chris Mauch Merrillville, Indiana

Sacred Grove

Your scent shapes the air in your form.
The air is teeming with your ripeness,
The succulent fruit which brings misgivings.
Should I follow this fragrance,
And journey to your sacred grove,
Partaking of produce where juices flow
And stick to anxious hands and mouth?

Are you Laura? Are you goblin fruit?

Do you nourish or rot my needy soul?

Will you till for me or thrill me?

Are you a protoplasmic jolt, leaving me defenseless

To an onslaught of cold?

I savor the scent
Of your glorious granules of pollen
And comtemplate my careful approach
Swollen with sweet intoxication
Bolstered by the warmth it gives me
Yet fearing a hidden thorn
Which may impale me in your secret grove
And display my body, dangling, as a symbol
Of man's folly.

-Gordon Stamper Griffith, Indiana

Romance Could Now Begin

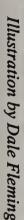
He stood upon the mountain, looking down He knew that she was waiting at the Inn He joyously rode down into the town Excited that romance could now begin.

She sat before the fire and softly hummed Her nimble fingers plucked the mandolin Remembering the night her heart succumbed Excited that romance could now begin.

The minister was ready, as arranged
The happy couple couldn't hide a grin
The wedding vows so quickly were exchanged
And finally, romance could now begin.

In olden days the bedding down awaited Until the wedding vows were celebrated.

—Laura Ruben Hammond, Indiana





WAITING

by Kristin Jensen

hate waiting. Especially when I have to wait alone and in the heat. I have gotten up three times and looked as far down the tracks as I could see. Every time I move, I realize how thick the air gets here in the summer and how I should quit smoking, but when I think of it, I want a cigarette.

The greasy-looking man on the bench is puffing away. I don't think, on account of how his eyes crept up my leg, that he'd lend me a smoke unless I offered something in return, so I walk through the open door of the station, get change from the reluctant ticket sales girl, and feed it into a cigarette machine. The change clinks and jingles as it

goes down. The pack falls with a quiet thump. I always loved opening my mother's cigarettes when I was a kid—that slow crinkle of plastic when I'd wind the pull tab around the pack and the smell of fresh tobacco as I'd tear back the foil; maybe that's why I smoke now. The filter tastes familiar, and I sit back down against the outside wall of the station and strike a match, adding heat to the already hot day. I inhale and wipe the sweat from my forehead with the back of my hand.

e has always kept me waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Waiting for the phone to ring on a Sunday. Waiting for an invitation to visit for the weekend. Waiting for him to tell me he loves me. I hate waiting.

But he doesn't think I mind. He thinks I am cool, not one of those clingy women his friends have been "sucked into marrying."

I suck on my cigarette. The sun is really hot on my skin, but I've grown used to it this summer, kind of the way my mom grew used to sticking her hands in nearly scalding dishwater. I always thought her skin must be half dead not to feel that. If my skin gets any darker he may not recognize me. Wouldn't that be funny? He'd know my eyes, though; he tells me they are the bluest he's ever seen, which is pretty cool, he thinks, since I've got brown hair. I've seen him with blonds in the past, like that one over there. God, what taste he had. Sometimes I worry that I must be like those others, but then I remember that he told me that it wasn't my looks that attracted him. He was trying to give me some kind of compliment with that, but who'd really take that as a compliment? Please. Everyone wants the person who sees them naked to think that they are the most beautiful person they've ever laid eyes on. Like I'd want to take my clothes off with someone who thinks I'm mediocre.

I waited and he told me that I was beauti-

ful, but by that time it was too late for me to believe it. It was after we had sex one time when he had obviously really enjoyed himself. Saying I was beautiful was a thank you, not a compliment.

I walk to the gravel and look down the track. Wonder what will happen when he gets off the train. Maybe his eyes will light up, his whole face, when he sees me, and he'll get a grin that lasts until he's right in front of me coming in close for a kiss, the kind that will make him drop his bag and pull me to him. I know this won't really happen, of course. I smash out the cigarette on the ground.

e met in a smoky bar, not

the sort of place where my mother wanted me to meet a nice man. That's okay because he's not a nice man. He's a charming man, a sexy, earthy man, but nice doesn't really come to mind he's too smooth to be nice. Nice reminds me of a man in a suit or a polo shirt, with neatly cut hair and an average face, the face of any man in a cereal commercial that the woman calls "Honey." I wouldn't call him that. He calls me "Babe," which at first I found really funny. I never thought I'd fall in love with guy who calls me "Babe." But it is natural when it comes from his lips. Or he calls me Claire. He told me that it means "light."

No, he doesn't look like a cereal man. He's more like a Levi's-501-meets-Marlboro-Man type. Only I don't think he's ever been on a horse. Not even a motorcycle. I've never seen him drive anything but a bike. He doesn't own anything else.

I'd be waiting for him to come over, and through the window I'd see him riding up my street. I always made sure to have some music playing on the stereo and a book close at hand so that he'd think I didn't much care when he'd arrive. Of course, I had planned my whole day around his arrival. I'd let him knock and then I'd set the book aside and open the door, and, try as I might, I couldn't keep an honest grin off my face when he'd smile and say, "Hey, babe." He'd come in and have his arms around me before the door could shut all the way. All the tension that had built up while I waited would fall away in chunks. The next morning, we'd drink some coffee or orange juice, and then he'd

leave after giving me a kiss to remind me that waiting for him was worth it, and ten minutes later I'd miss him, and the smile that my face couldn't seem to ditch would leave, too.

I hated that he moved five hours away, but I stayed hopeful when he started calling me from there. I thought that we would be over once he left town. Now we will have weekends together. Of course, he'll have to visit his friends, too, but at least I'll have him for more than one night. Maybe it won't be bad.

My mouth is so dry. There is a sandwich shop with a bar across the street from the station. I think that a beer might do me some good.

The sandwich shop is sort of dark, especially coming in out of the sunlight. I walk toward the bar, and as my eyes start to adjust, I see a figure sitting there, hunched over a bottle of beer. He is a large old man with a bushy grey beard and a fisherman's hat, and he has very white shins. He is the only other patron.

"Good afternoon," he says in a low, scratchy voice once I'm seated around the corner of the bar from him.

"Hi," I say.

"What can I get you?" the bartender asks as he wipes the space in front of me with a wet rag.

I order a beer.

"Can I see your ID, please."

I dig inside my bag for my wallet. Maybe I should ask you for yours, I think. He barely looks old enough to serve me. He slides my license back to me.

"Thanks," he says as he bends, opens a cabinet door, and returns with a green bottle. Like a magician, he passes his hand over the top where the cap disappears with a *fffpt* and is replaced by a small puff of chilled vapor. The cold, smooth ring of glass relieves my dry lips, and the beer bites my tongue and throat in a comforting way. This has to be the best beer I've ever had.

"Nothing like a cold beer in this kind of heat," the old man says to me.

"Mmmhmm," I say, nodding.

"It sure is hot."

I wonder how he can stand that beard.

"I almost," he says stretching over my way, "shaved my beard off."

He leans back in the bar chair and strokes

his hairy face.

"Haven't seen my chin in years," he says.

"Really," I say.

"Mmmhmm."

The bartender is slicing meat on the other side of the room. I don't imagine he'll be back until our bottles are empty. He answers the ringing phone.

No, he won't be back for a while.

I look out the window at the train station Still no train.

"You waiting for somebody?" the old mar asks.

"Yeah." I take another sip of beer. And ther a swig.

"Your boyfriend?"

"Not exactly."

"Not exactly? Well, either he is or he isn't, right?" He is grinning.

My boyfriend. Friend who is a boy? My lover? Not exactly. I light a cigarette.

"Sort of a friend."

"Not by the way you look, girl," he laughs. I can feel the blood in my cheeks. I hate blushing and always think I'm over it. I take another swig to cool myself down. Nosy old man.

I look into my golden beer at the little bubbles racing toward the top and fold the edges of my paper coaster.

here is a warm breeze at my back, and at the door stands the blond from the train station. She pauses and looks around the almost empty shop before removing her sunglasses. I think she's going to sit in a booth, but she walks over to the bar and sits two stools down from me. She hasn't looked at me yet. As she does, I look into my beer again, and as if finding the color right, I pick it up and swallow.

"I'll have one of those," she says to the bartender/sandwich maker (who has promptly made his way over here), never motioning my way, and he retrieves a bottle like mine for her. I blow smoke at the ceiling above his head.

"Hello," the old man says.

"Hi," she says, and gives him a smile the lingers after her eyes have turned away from him, to her beer.

"Nothing like a cold beer in this kind of heat," he says to her.

I look at him.

"So how long do you think the train'll be?" she says to me.

She smells like flowers—reminds me of ny mother. I bet the bees love her.

"About a half-hour maybe," I offer.

I wonder who she's waiting for. The old nan slides off his chair and stands for a few seconds.

"Excuse me, ladies," he says as he makes is way past our stools toward the restrooms n the back of the shop.

he blond takes this opportunity to adjust her short, floral skirt which has not tucked itself properly underneath her thighs. My own thighs are sticking a ittle to the chair. There's no adjusting the hort cut-off jeans, though. I notice that her oenails are polished. When I look up from ler feet, she is looking straight at me.

"I like your sandals," I say.

"Oh. Thanks."

My mother polishes her toes. I always atted the smell of nail polish because I knew hat she'd be going out with Andy. She always got extra fixed up for that dope. I uppose that she did all of that to please him, eeing how his wife must not have.

"Your sandals look comfortable," she says. Are those Birkenstocks?"

I look down and wiggle my toes that are ticking out from the thick leather straps.

"Yeah. Once you put these on your feet, ou'll never want to wear anything else."

But I know that she probably owns twenty airs of shoes, set neatly on a shoe rack in he bottom of her closet, each matching a varticular outfit.

"Yes, that's what I've heard," she says.
Still no train. The old man returns from the athroom and sets a dollar on the bar.

"Well, you girls have a nice afternoon. And ou kiss your boyfriend for me," he points to ne and says, laughing as he walks out the oor.

I roll my eyes, and the blond smiles. Goofy old man," she says.

I take one last drag and crush my cigarette ut.

"Can I get you anything?" the bartender sks her, leaning on the bar and smiling into er eyes. She declines.

"I'll have another," I say.

He sets the beer in front of me.

"You look familiar," he says to her.

I look over at the empty train station while the bartender tries to strike up conversation with the blond. She is polite and sweet, but keeps it short. She glances across the street. I can't wait to see who she's waiting for. I sip my beer. I wouldn't be surprised if it weren't someone just like my mother's Andy. God, that guy! She really thought he was the cat's meow.

The blond checks her watch and hops off the stool, heading toward the bathroom with her purse, probably to touch up her face. I remember waiting with my mother for Andy to show up. It must have been tricky to get away from his wife as often as he did, let alone give my mother a definite time of arrival. She'd keep looking in the mirror, smoothing her blond hair, applying just a little more lipstick, just a little more powder while she waited. I remember standing behind her, looking at her and she looking at herself and smiling, trying to see what his eyes would see. Oh, for what, Mom! He only keeps you waiting! He was a good Catholic, she later explained, so he couldn't actually leave his wife. You'll have to wait for him until she dies, I thought. She still sees him sometimes, I think.

I swallow my beer and look across the street. The train is pulling in. It is rolling slowly to a stop as the blond returns with fresh lipstick to replace the stuff she left on the beer bottle.

She walks past me to the window, saying, "Oh, the train, finally."

She reaches into her purse, pulls out a single, and sets it on the bar. "Coming?" she asks me.

"I still have half a beer left," I say. "You go."

We say goodbye. Yes, you go. I watch her quickly cross the street.

The silver cars open their small doors, and the conductors jump down and fix the steps for the passengers. I swallow down the beer. People are descending from the train. I watch each of the three doors for him, but he hasn't come out yet. What if he missed the train?

There he is.

He looks around the crowd, then sets down his duffel bag in the gravel and retrieves his sunglasses. He is walking into the back of the station and out of my sight. He is probably looking for me inside. I wonder how long he will wait. I'll let him. I tip my cigarette pack, and the last one slides out, onto the bar.

"Hey, can I get another beer?" I ask the bartender who is again slicing meat.

As I take the first sip, he pushes open the front door of the station and looks down the street. Does he think I gave up and went home? That sun has got to be really hot on him, sitting there on the steps. He twists his hair into a ponytail, his lovely long hair. I take another swig, but I'm feeling full and sloshy. I'm not sure if I want to finish this beer. Has he waited long enough? It must really be hot. I twist my half-smoked cigarette into the bottom of the ashtray.

"Got any gum?" I ask, and the bartender sells me a pack, which I fumble with.

ost of the passengers and those who were waiting for them have left the station. As I shove a stick of gum into my mouth, the front door of the station pushes open again, and the blond

the station pushes open again, and the blond pops out—carrying a bag! Oh, she's not really going to carry some guy's bag, is she? She holds the door open, and out steps another woman. Wow, they must be sisters. He turns to look at them and watches them descend the stairs, carrying bags, chattering and laughing. His gaze follows them as they begin down the sidewalk and then, again, he looks down the street—the jerk. The duffel bag seems heavy on his shoulder as he starts down the street in the direction of my house.

In the bathroom of the sandwich shop, I check myself in the mirror while I wash my hands.

The hot, thick air rushes to cling to my airconditioned skin as I step out onto the sidewalk. I squint and remember my sunglasses. My feet are clumsier than when I first arrived at the sandwich shop, and I have to slow my pace. I stroll down the street, knowing that he will be at my door soon.

Kristin Jensen lives in Crete, Illinois.

Ever Feel Dirt Again

Mind-forged Manacles

Trees don't seek permission to bend into sunlight, drape branches in water, expand into sky.

Birds do not stop to ask directions of breeze, but ride full and narrow dark and free.

We alone succumb to mind-forged manacles, press against destiny, refute earth and stars.

Profane, time-bound, will-enamoured, we strive.

May this day sundrench thought into oblivion, engulf care in Lethe, let fingers become loose willow leaves that dangle and stroke the humid air as I would your tired brow.

—Monika Lee London, Ontario, Canada I feel like flower bulbs wintering in a cellar, the smell of earth keeping me alive like an oxygen tent until I am buried to bloom again. But I feel forgotten, rotten trying to suck dust out of the smell, to swell tuck it between my drying, dying tubers, but smell to my soul hollows out a promise of spring hung like dung on a string.

—Diane Webster Delta, Colorado

Solstice

A barely-hid disdain,
Your mouth a bottom line
With bookend creases
Marking stark parentheses
Of loss and pain,
Disapproving of me one more time.

And on the instant clouds descend, Skies no longer blue, but blue, Sun hangs his head, Grows tarnished, dims, My teardrops freeze Before they're shed.

—Earl Coleman Croton on Hudson, New York Before the first, without any sky who could expect the closest star to swallow the Earth as in the sunlit womb that swells around all planets and fires—

before the first dream, without any shadow each spark flares out for still more light.

In such a fire you feel
the life leaving you: your twin
face up in the Flood
though you were saved and the Ark
paired you to look forever
in the water you drink—even now

your arms around your heart as if the fire inside could be held you begin to dance a circle stretched wider and wider till everyone is singing—you hear

your twin, a splash, around and around that the Earth at least for a few hours does not see you holding your hand underwater—

from such a hand each morning reaches out tighter and tighter—who would expect your first breath would sing only to the dark.



John Says Give Me Your Heart

It is gentle and I want to know it.

First thought is run, but I've been alone

so many months. I stretch

my arms to see if they still reach

another human being. And they do.

John says put out the light

and he swoops down with a force

even time doesn't have.

I'm a young girl compared to the Earth,

and I've seen animals shred each other's skin in the name of hunger

which everyone forgives.

Next morning, light tears me up like a canine tooth.

I am alone, although John is here.

He turns to me and simply says give me your heart.

It is mine now and later

I might want it.

—Francine Witte New York, New York

Finding A Wife

I find my wife in the drawer with the small spoons, wrapped in a napkin, squinting at light. Again I find my wife crawling in a covered dish, arranging the rocks from a hillside in Scotland, looking to add an outlet. I find my wife in the mirror, and I find my wife on the toilet between the wig holder and goddess statue. She wants to build a staircase to the shelf in the hall closet. She wants a chimney bedroom. She's pleased the attic is painted shut. Wants me to keep subtracting weight. I find I have lots of wives now she's dividing. I find her in the kitchen window clutching the screen, wanting in or wanting out. My wife envies fireflies their spaces between, their confidence floating the shrubs, instructing the lawn of desire. I find her abdomen delightfully green.

Bruce Gentry

The Clinic at Lake Buchanan

My father cast as if his family depended on that arm, catching pounds of flouncing bass. His fists held secrets of fish. His knuckles unlocked lakes when other hooks went begging.

He tumbled bushels of fish into strangers' baskets and ice chests. No one went hungry. He taught me to set a hook, to let the small fry go, to build a fire. On hot, still days without nibbles, he taught me to wait,

the hardest lesson. In the boat when his heart failed, I learned how to hurry, how to pace a hall while men with knives tried to revive him, the emergency hall like a morgue, masked nurses rushing through doors.

--- Walter McDonald Lubbock, Texas



The Evening

You wrapped a strand of your hair around two fingers. Butterflies plundered buddleia. I crushed a sprig of boxwood, impregnating the air.

As night shoved out light, a star broke loose, arced west, and doused itself in darkness. The moon was a curved scar.

> —John Wheatcroft Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

The Lesson

What is the nature of the moon?

The moon is mother. She waxes quick, wanes barren, without ever bearing her child.

What is the nature of the sun?

The sun is not the moon, but fire.

And fire?

Hot fire, cold fire, the end of things.

And earth?

Cold fire.

We must shoo the pigeons off the walk each morning as we go out. Why is this so?

The rivers we have stopped, trees levelled, homes broken open.
They remind us that we are thieves.

What was stolen?

Peace was stolen.

What is the nature of peace?

Peace is the unborn child of the moon.

Why is there no peace?

When the moon bears her child, she will fall to the sea, and rest on the sea's floor, a bright rind empty of fruit.

—Amy England Denver, Colorado



Working all night,
No comfort from a mistress moon,
Rather, dawn, a frost of early tears
Cloaking weariness. Walking,
Huddled against the damp, slowly
Homeward. Distant distracting sounds—
A clankering of urbania shredding
The pearly sleep of the soon-to-rise.
I reach my castle; my moat, a speckled
Puddle on the lawn. Birth-giving clouds
now miles away. The sun mounts;
I subside, sliding into cool covers, reliving,
Rebreathing the dawn's walk home.

—Robert C. Blossman Houma, Louisiana

Moon Promise, On The Heels Of Searing Heat

That same atmospheric high that bakes the South denies Hurricane Felix entry into Carolina.
Six degrees above the century mark, the mercury wilted everything today except my spirit, which rode the desert breeze through needles of evergreen.

I reveled in the warmth; my bones approved the heat.

Tonight, I soften grass with sprinkling to restore the green.

The moon is gentle, wading among tall treetops.

It holds the promise of morning kindness for when I look out at six.

—Harding Stedler Cabot, Arkansas

WEMYSS OF THAT ILK

by Karl Harshbarger

n this Monday morning Lothar Fisher stepped out onto the porch of his house and into the wonderful spring air and paused before walking on to the College. Behind his house, the garden shed, and behind the garden shed, his garden unfurling in new rows of just-planted seeds. Beyond the garden the rest of the back yard stretched all the way to the fence and the apple trees down by the alley, the grass still sweet from yesterday's mowing. My God! And the flowers coming up unbidden around the bushes at the side of the house and the trees heavy with new leaves! Spring! Now in the rich earth of Iowa everything was sure to

No way! No way at all! He couldn't possibly walk directly towards the College, throwing away in just three blocks the trees and the flowers and the just-mown yards, even if one of his students would be waiting for him. So on this beautiful April Monday morning Lothar Fisher turned the other direction, the way he and his wife (she all pregnant with David) used to walk in those first months when they came to Addison College three years ago, out through the tunnels of trees towards the edge of town and the farmers' fields beyond.

So? But where were the others walking in towards the College to meet their first classes? Bob Smith or Clifford Leach or Jim Sommerfield or Harry Pickering? Or any of the others who lived out this way? Why didn't he see them coming along through the tree tunnels? Just as well. Not meeting any of them gave him time to stop in front of the Leach house. From the beginning three years ago, he and his wife had always loved looking at it, thought of some day living in a place like that. Maybe even not a place like that, but that very house. Perhaps after Clifford retired. The house was so ultimately Iowan, all white with gables, and the porch wrapped around two sides, the blue floorboards of the porch shining in the sun behind the white-slatted railings, and the bushes and flowers hugging up next to the porch, giving way to the back yard. Again,



the back yard. The huge back yard. It was the extravagance, the sweep of the space, so much so that even the largest gardens couldn't contain these yards, an overflowing just as in himself, a wonderful exuberance.

Finally! Someone he knew! Bob Irwin, tall, thin, loping, full of energy, a briefcase swinging from each hand, striding down the sidewalk. Good. A nice surprise. But now seeing that quick loping pace, to be honest, a kind of pang of what? jealously? because before Lothar could stuff this nasty feeling down, a flash came to him: everything was going Irwin's way, Chairman of the Five Year Planning Committee, students crowding around him, almost clinging, his upperlevel course closed out each semester, the dean even extending the numbers so that more could enroll, and then, of all things, this journal he brought with him from graduate school. An editor! Even though he was just an assistant professor like himself. People sending him manuscripts from all over the country!

But as Irwin stopped beside him, still jiggling his body up and down—couldn't the man ever stand still?—his obvious delight in seeing Lothar, thank God, banished those petty and stupid thoughts.

"Aren't you going the wrong way?" said Bob Irwin.

"On a day like this?" replied Lothar.

"You know," said Irwin, his body still jiggling up and down, "this weather really makes you want to throw it all in. Just pitch it." "That would be the day. For you."

"Now, now," said Irwin, "you never know."

Lothar tried to keep up with Irwin as they walked back towards the College.

"I got this idea last night," said Lothar. "About Goethe and Homer."

"Fire away."

"Actually, a student put me onto it."

"Isn't that the way!"

Lothar found himself rushing through his new thoughts—maybe because they were walking so fast—on Goethe and Homer, or more particularly about Faust as Achilles, the similarity in the egotism as well as the standard references.

"Fantastic!" said Irwin.

"And I believe it's new."

"Absolutely new."

"And perhaps there's an article there."

"Absolutely."

"You think so?"

"Show me something as soon as you've worked it up," said Bob Irwin. "You know the kind of drivel that usually comes in."

"I will. I definitely will," said Lothar.

They were already at the edge of the campus and acknowledging the greetings of students.

"See you at three this afternoon?"

"What?" said Lothar.

"You haven't forgotten? Come on! We've got to get that search committee together."

"I did forget."

"Shame on you," said Bob Irwin. "Absentminded professor! But you're coming. We can't let the president put some yo-yo over on us."

"My God, no!"

"That's my man!" said Irwin. "We've got to stick together!"

They said goodbye and Irwin peeled off into Old Main and Lothar continued around behind Old Main on that little path the students had made out to the Annex which housed the German department.

"Guten Morgen, Lothar."

Claus Lanchinski waved at Lothar from behind his desk where he was talking to a student.

"Guten Morgen."

ut no time to talk now. Up the stairs and around the corner. Of course, there she was, his student, Julia Fletcher, sitting at the top of the stairs and waiting dutifully. But bent over a book and writing notes. How about these Addison students!

"Good morning, Dr. Fisher."

"Good morning, good morning, Julia."

Just at that moment he saw a computer print-out lodged half-way under his door and knew it was the print-out for the pre-registration for fall classes. Probably the student assistant from the dean's office had brought it over from the computer center early this morning.

Lothar turned the key in his door and opened it to free the print-out.

"Would you excuse me for just a moment, Julia?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, Dr. Fisher."

Of course, it was a bit impolite to keep her waiting outside his office; on the other hand, he wanted to see the numbers on his classes for the fall. So he closed the door, laid the print-out out on his desk, and began to lift through the pages, pausing at the particularly large classes, Biology 108, Economics 101, and so forth—as always Bob Irwin's upper-level class crammed above the limit, forty-two, when it was supposed to stop at thirty-five. "The Rhetoric of Revolt." Well, of course, with a title like that. . .

Now, his classes. The two introductory language courses, yes, fine, one twenty, the other twenty-three. Lothar flipped up the next page. His advanced course on German Romantics. Was this a mistake? One student!

He went back a page, then forward again. Yes, that was his name. Fisher. German Romanticism. GER 407. One student.

My God!

Julia Fletcher would have to wait. Lothar walked from one end of his small office to the other and back again, and forward and back again. So. There it was. He had to admit it. The possibility. Maybe even the probability. But was it conceivable? Something like that? His retention review came up in the fall. A decision against him? No tenure? The letter from the president's office? Or the office of the chairman of the board? Forced to leave the College. Because each time, his advanced class had gotten smaller and smaller. And now only one student! President Galer had explained it all to him very clearly, too clearly, really, in the beginning. The German Department was fighting for its life. There had already been talk of letting it and Russian go. I'll put it to you bluntly, the president had said, you had better be the man to fill those advanced classes.

So maybe none of the rest of it, the trees and the flowers and the back yards and the Clifford Leach house when he retired. . . Look, the president had said, don't kid yourself, politics are politics. We play hardball here.

Lothar sat down at his desk and tried to work his way through it again. The first time, that is, when the advanced class dropped to six, Claus Lanchinski had excused it. These things happen, he had said. You can never tell. So don't worry about it. The next semester when the class dropped to four, Claus got the dean's permission to move Lothar over to a Literary Foundations section where he taught a big section of freshmen which met in the lecture room in Old Main right across from Clifford Leach's office. He remembered having to wait with his students out in the hall because Bob Irwin's section of Literary Foundations always ran late and, even after the class ended and the door opened, so many students collected around Irwin up at the lectern that it was hard for his students to even get into the room.

But at least probably for a while nothing would happen. Claus might even say again, don't worry, you never know about these things, classes are so strange. Of course, Lothar would be switched over to Literary Foundations again. Claus might even go so

far as to say how important it was for the College to have qualified people teaching those kinds of freshman courses. Only this time, he hoped he wouldn't teach in the time slot right after Bob Irwin.

It was just that. . .

But he had forgotten about his student, Julia Fletcher, sitting on the steps outside his office. He had to do something about her. Get rid of her somehow. Tell her to go away. He went over to the door and opened it, but when she looked up from her book her smile was so bright that, instead of asking her to leave, he motioned her in.

"Please," he said, and indicated the chair in front of his desk.

"Shall we continue from where we left off last week?" she asked.

"I beg your pardon?"

"That's what I've prepared for."

"Yes, fine, Julia."

And so she began reading from her notes. He couldn't find it in himself to concentrate on what she was saying because the figures from the computer print-out, or, rather, in his case, the figure, yes, that was it, the figure, kept coming back to him. One student. However, he remembered to nod at what he thought were the appropriate moments, and once he said, "Could you clarify that point?" "Yes, certainly," she replied, and went on, explaining as Lothar kept nodding.

"Julia, can I show you something?"

"Oh, what?" she said, interrupting herself.

hat was he doing handing her the computer print-out?
Professors didn't do things like this. "Highly unprofessional" was the phrase that came to his mind as he put it down in front

of her.

"Those are the pre-registration figures for

"Oh," she said, and Lothar could see she had no idea at all why he was doing this.

"Just look."

Lothar lifted the pages to the proper place and with his fingers pointed out his class on German Romanticism.

She looked at where his finger rested, then back at him and then back down to his finger. "Yes?" she said.

"Well, look, only one student signed up."
"Oh," she said.

Again aware that professors never did anything like this, Lothar found himself saying, "I can't understand how it happened. I just

an't understand it at all. This is a complete surprise to me."

"Yes?" she said.

"I just would have thought more would have signed up."

"Oh," she said.

Lothar could see that she really had no comprehension at all of the stakes involved. "I'll just take this, if you don't mind."

Lothar reached over and pulled the comouter print-out over to his side of the desk and turned it around so it faced him.

"Dr. Fisher?"

"Yes?"

"Should I go now?"

"Yes, please."

* * *

He sat at his desk for a full ten minutes after she had gone. Finally, he heard the student Claus Lanchinski had been talking to get up to leave, then heard Claus talking to someone on the phone (maybe to the president?), and then the scraping of his swivel thair, the opening and the closing of his office door, then the sound of his steps going down the outside stairs.

Lothar waited perhaps another three minites, got up, looked out the window, no Claus Lanchinski, went out of his office, paused just briefly at the turn of the stairs half way down to make doubly sure, hurried past Claus' door and stepped out into the bright spring day.

Yes, everything was just the same as before, the new-mown grass, the careful borders of flowers, the trees freshly green, the sweet smell of the air, the students walking in their youth. Up across the campus he saw hose two familiar figures, Clifford Leach and Bob Smith, crossing on the sidewalk from the Union to Old Main. Clifford a bit stooped over now. Bob as straight as ever. Of course, they were coming from their little able up in the corner of the coffee bar where they always sat from nine-thirty to ten, sometimes joined by Jim Sommerfield. They nad been doing that, the two of them, someimes the three of them, for years, long pefore Lothar's arrival.

He found himself walking up past Old Main toward the Union, nodding hello to the students who said hello to him, but wondering what they were saying once they were past him. Were they already talking about him? It had been so stupid to show Julia

Fletcher that print-out because now she would, of course, tell the other students. Or probably would. Professor Fisher's advanced German class had attracted only one student. Perhaps most of them already knew. Yet, so far, at least, their "hello's" to him seemed genuine.

evertheless, it was with some

relief that he entered the coffee shop at the Union and saw his very own group, the Young Turks, Irwin, Schwartz, Teal, Colwell, Petty, and Reardon, joined by Orrman and Fishbein from Chemistry, all crowded around the table at the usual place by the huge window. And, yes, of course, Irwin saw him first, waving with those lanky windmill arms and even pulling a chair over from another table. So, maybe it was okay. He had exaggerated everything. But there were so many around the table today that Lothar found himself reduced to sitting slightly outside the circle. Still he now tried to focus in on the subject of the conversation which apparently had to do with the meaning of the word ilk. Irwin was taking the view that the word was a derogatory term meaning a low group of people, the kind no one liked, for example, "President Galer and that ilk." Everyone at the table laughed at the slam at the president. Then Colwell—he was the kind of person who knew such thingspushed the joke further, pointing out that the Scottish derivation of ilk meant a territorial designation, thus "Wemyss of that ilk" meant "Wemyss of Wemyss," or better yet, "Galer of that ilk" meant "Galer of Galer." Even though Lothar had as many doubts about the new president as most of the faculty, he didn't join the others in laughing. Maybe it was because of his position somewhat outside the circle as opposed to his usual position right in there, or maybe it was because the same group (minus Orrman and Fishbein) had had a somewhat similar discussion yesterday about the various meanings of the word conduce, in which they had also managed to slam the president. But mainly he didn't laugh because suddenly it struck Lothar that both Colwell and Irwin were talking nonsense. (Teal had now joined in, suggesting another derivation, ilka, each,

But face it: these were intelligent men, college professors. How could they indulge themselves in this kind of talk?

every, perhaps coming from the Middle

English ech?) Not nonsense, exactly.

Knowledgeable, yes, informative in its way, but somehow trivial. Terribly trivial. Terribly, terribly trivial. Had he just missed all this before? Been too much a part of it? Been pulled in? Lothar's mind leapt ahead. He himself had said so many wise things in class to his students. What if all these observations were also just nonsense? And not just himself but all of them, all the faculty, the wise things all of them said in their classes week after week. Month after month. Not only what they said in class, but also, God knew, what they wrote. All of them. The endless articles in the endless journals, Faust as Achilles and all that, now added to by Bob Irwin's journal. Stored away in endless shelves in endless libraries. Some kind of babble of idiocy?

Lothar found himself getting up.

"Leaving?" said Irwin, jiggling up and down as always.

"Unfortunately, I scheduled in a student."
"Go for it," said Irwin.

utside the Union, in the spring air, Lothar

Fisher found himself walking

slowly along a retaining wall

which ran along a flower bed. It came back to him that this very wall was the place where he and his wife and the Irwins had sat on a blanket at the first fall faculty and staff picnic three years ago when they first came. He now remembered this event as if from a great distance, those sentimental feelings, the love towards everyone, not just the Irwins, but all of the faculty picnicking on blankets, whether he knew them yet or not, even—My God! had he thought this?—of the professors who weren't there, the professors who had retired and even the professors who had died but whose spirit, living in the institution, hovered above them. That had been then. Not now. Wemyss of that ilk. Lothar looked out over the lawns and buildings of Addison College and felt a sudden start. No one in sight. Not a single student. Not a single faculty member. The sidewalks and grass empty. The sweep of the campus looked as it sometimes did caught in the dead of summer when he came back too early from his summer vacation and found no one there.

Karl Harshbarger lives in Hamm, Germany.



Grapevine

Withered, weathered, it won't play dead in the wind. Its 2x4 trellis isn't dry and damaged, not quite.

Hour spirals around hour; all day brittle curlicues stir in the wind, offset by rumors of purple light.

January is a hard month. We stay inside, reduced to gossip, guessing why, who's wrong, what's right.

—Matthew Babcock Rochester, New York

Replacement

Flying ants are living and dying on the window sill in the laundry room, wasps are building a nest in the living room casement; but they don't come into the house any farther—they seem comfortable where they are.

Last summer's tomato poles remain stacked by the back door, like a crumbling sculpture a bird's nest perches on the light outside the front door. I've wanted to trade for a single bed yet I still hope for a better fit.

I'll live by the example of my cat who knows patience because he has marked out his territory.

—Ray Greenblatt Paoli, Pennsylvania

Gas Station Man, 3 A.M.

Anyone passing through would swear that this tinkling of change meant that something added up,

or that 20 years of oily rags equalled 20 years of a life. But days go by and my death

is moving towards me like a slow semi on its way from Detroit.

On nights like this, all moon and road and tail light, I forget that it could pull in any time.

Right now, my wife waits up, shaping fat loaves of dough into baby plumpness.

At midnight, I snuck home, hungry, caught her cradling one in the dark.

I ran back here, remembered the times she begged for a child, how I told her *not now* or *not yet*.

But all I could do at 3 A.M. was warm another

can of stew, empty it down, quick and unnoticed past my heart.

--Francine Witte New York, New York

On A Bus I Think Of Home

Some chatter approaches my curtain of sleep; slowly walks up to it, pokes at it, bleeds through and redirects my thought. It opens a new channel, a pipeline of awareness; a search for recognition begins, pulls me to the infant day. I feel like I'm sleeping in my aunt's small recliner; broken, it won't pull back, and a radio talk show is being piped in from the kitchen, but the only smell here is boredom, and when my eyes peel back, I know I'm still on a bus.

Two seats down
a girl is still crying but
nothing is happening here.
Outside, snow-specked trees
race by us and a distant house
winks one fiery eye in the early sun.

I think of the dreams
happening in that house; wonder
where their rusted blue pick-up
will go later this morning
and suddenly, I'm there,
with the smell of eggs and toast
competing with the steam of coffee,
waiting for my wife
to come down, out of sleep;
waiting to kiss her in this morning
that I've already wasted on the road.

—Jon Snyder Bristol, Connecticut

The Peephole In My Door

Sometimes I stand in the shadows of my room, and peer through the peephole in my door.

People appear, impossibly large distended faces, but for a moment

only, simply drifting out of range of my narrow window.

I always know
I might enlarge
my field of vision:
open the door,
invite them in,

but I never do. Strange that I am not sadder.

—Albert D. Pionke Urbana, Illinois

Space Enclosed

Obsessed with space enclosed, going to all the Open Houses on Sunday, pretending (or maybe not) that I'm a prospective buyer, entering into special spaces, glass-walls looking out on private gardens, whirlpool hot tubs, sub-sub basements chill in the middle of summer, "It began as a bomb shelter, but then I turned it into a bedroom," into which not even the lowest frequencies can penetrate, warp-woof trains and rap-bass that cores into the night around me, looking for the vista from the hill that looks out over Eden, when the Young Sun Adam couples with Mother Eve and the New Year begins, worldmountain, home of the gods.

—Hugh Fox
East Lansing, Michigan



THE TIME I SHOT AT A PANTHER

AND WOUNDED THE OUTHOUSE

AND OTHER TALES FROM MY CHILDHOOD

by Virginia A. Deweese

hen I was twenty-eight years old, I told my mother that one of my earliest recollections of life was waking up in the middle of the night and seeing the house flooded up to the mattress on which I had been sleeping. Initially, sounds of my mother and daddy trying to save what they could of our belongings had awakened me. I remember the old chifferobe with the busted mirror (more on that later) and the two beds on either side of it. The other bed was where Mother and Daddy slept; this was the only bedroom we had. We lived in a shotgun house and the hall ran down the right side of the building. None of the rooms had doors or even walls where they connected with the hall—so everyone saw everyone else as they moved back and forth between rooms. What really upset me that night was watching my baby doll, handmade and stuffed by my grandmother and almost twice my size, float down the hall, heading for the living room and parts unknown.

An earlier memory concerning this same house in Futheyville, Mississippi, was hearing my daddy come home late one night, yelling at my mother and then throwing up. That was the night he put his fist through the chifferobe mirror. Later, I found out that there seemed to be no explanation for his destroying furniture or any household item, for that matter, other than because he was drunk. Most times, he never remembered what he did while he was drinking heavily. But we did. That night, I can remember my mother trying to reason with him, saying, "Virginia Ann just got to sleep. Let's not wake her tonight." Of course, it was a number of years before I understood that my father drank a lot and often went into these rages, wrecking the furnishings, and hurting my mother, both physically and mentally.

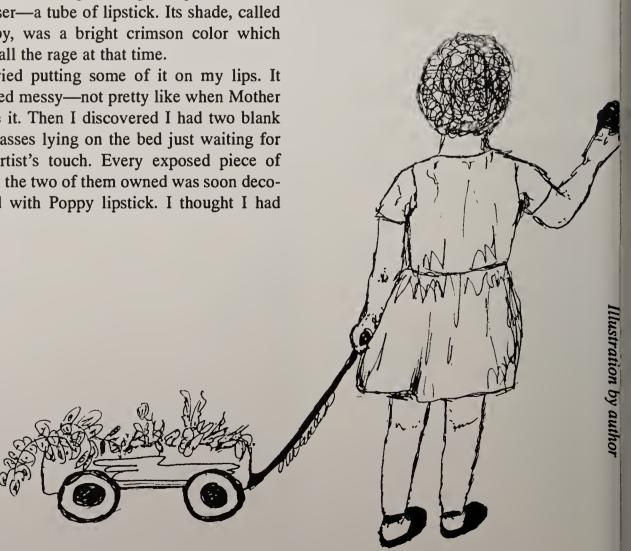
Mother said that I had been less than two years old when these two events happened. However, both incidents impressed me so much that I was able to describe them accurately to her after I'd become an adult.

For several years after this, my home life was uneventful. No memory stands out in my mind until I was five years old. Then I recall my mother expecting my brother, William. It was a fall day with a little nip to the air, and Mother and Daddy had laid down to take a nap. Of course, I was expected to join them. Rather than lying in the regular direction on the bed, we laid across it horizontally. I didn't sleep long. After checking to see that my parents were asleep, I crawled off the bed to investigate. Soon I found something thrilling on top of Mother's dresser—a tube of lipstick. Its shade, called Poppy, was a bright crimson color which was all the rage at that time.

I tried putting some of it on my lips. It looked messy—not pretty like when Mother wore it. Then I discovered I had two blank canvasses lying on the bed just waiting for an artist's touch. Every exposed piece of flesh the two of them owned was soon decorated with Poppy lipstick. I thought I had

done an especially nice job on Mother's lips and face. After all, I had watched her apply lipstick so many times before.

However, when they finally woke up, to say they weren't appreciative of my painterly pastime is an understatement. Mother put the thin wooden slat from the bottom of a window shade to good use that day. Luckily, not over all of my exposed flesh—just my bottom. I think this episode may have been the reason why I didn't start wearing lipstick until I was fifteen. At that time, I chose a pinkish, almost clear color, you could buy in a little metal tube for a few cents at the dollar store.





Mother liked to tell about the time I was ive years old and had a little friend named Adam who was four. I also had a little red vagon. We lived right outside Grenada, Mississippi, in a small house behind Big Ma and Big Dad's big green house. Mother said hat Big Dad had bought her tomatoes fresh from the garden every day while she was pregnant with me because that's what she craved even though they gave her a rash. Big Dad already had a grandson and was excited about his first granddaughter being born. See, Mother always knew whether we would be male or female. It's a gift from our Big Ma's side of the family. Unfortunately, Big Dad caught pneumonia right before I was orn and died when I was twelve days old. For the last two weeks of his life, he didn't ecognize Big Ma or their children. However, when mother took me to see him and laid me on his chest, he rallied enough to recognize me. The one thing I regret most about my childhood is not knowing my Big Dad. From the tales that have come down through the family, he was remarkable. Upon his first wife's death in childbirth, he decided to give up being an attorney. Moving from Georgia to Mississippi, he became a farmer. He and Big Ma had ten children, one of whom died at birth. Now, there are only three of those children still alive.

ater, the area where the two houses once stood became a part of the Grenada dam backwaters. But so many of my childhood memories come from the years I spent there in the country with family. I only wish I could take snapshots of the pictures in my mind. But my mother's story about my friend Adam, my little red wagon and me was vividly retold by her on numerous occasions.

One sunny, hot July afternoon, Adam and I

decided to walk down the gravel road and visit Mrs. Peterson. Or, more precisely, to visit her lovely flowers. Her beds of gladiolas, sweet peas, pansies, and irises were a tapestry of brilliant colors stretching down each side of the house and along the front porch. You see, she didn't have children so all she did was clean house and plant flowers (at least, that's what Mother said). On this particular day, I told Adam to pick all the flowers he wanted. He should fill up the little red wagon, so we could take them to our mothers. Just as soon as he began pulling the brightly colored blossoms, Mrs. Peterson came out on the front porch. She began yelling at us to go away or she'd tell our mothers.

ell, being sassy for my age (when I was grown and Mother told about my escapades, she always called me a "bitch in a bonnet"), I grabbed the biggest rock I could find in the gravel road and said, "If you don't get back in that danged house, I'm going to hit you in the head with the danged rock." Needless to say, Mrs. Peterson got back in her house real quick. Behind the safety of her living room curtains, she watched us destroy her flower beds.

Later, Mrs. Peterson walked to our house to tell Mother about my keeping her at bay with a BIG rock. She wanted Mother to beat my behind for behaving that way. Mother told her that if she allowed two children, with an arsenal of one rock, to intimidate her, then she got what she deserved.

Mother continued, saying, "You should have grabbed a switch and let both of them have it right there, right then." Of course, I did get a switching later. Mrs. Peterson never knew about it. Adam didn't get anything but a talking to. Mostly, his parents told him to stay away from troublemakers

like Virginia Ann.

hen I was ten, we were living in Batesville,
Mississippi, right across
the road from a cotton gin.
Our house stood behind a
general store and blacknith shop that had a small sawmill attached
one side of it. Besides shoeing horses, the

smith shop that had a small sawmill attached to one side of it. Besides shoeing horses, the blacksmith had a pet King snake that he shared his lunch with every day. Even though we became acquainted with "King," as the blacksmith called him, it was still disquieting to see the sawdust undulating as the snake moved beneath it. Worse, sometimes I'd be sitting on a sawhorse inside the shop talking with the smitty. The snake would drop down out of the rafters. He would swing back and forth in front of my face. To me, snakes were mortal enemies, and to come face to face with one was an experience I hated. Still, I always went back for more because the smitty was always willing to help me with things like attaching a can to a long pole for catching tadpoles.

The cotton gin, operating only during the summer and fall months, set up such a racket that the noise could be heard for miles around. As we lived so close to it and the gin ran twenty-four hours a day during the busy season, getting to sleep was a chore. About the time we would get used to the sounds of cotton being baled and the men yelling back and forth to each other, the gin shut down. The cotton season would be over for another year.

Mother was pregnant—my little brother William and I wished for a little sister. In January, on the coldest day ever recorded in Mississippi's history, we got what we had hoped for. The reason William wanted a sister was so I would stop dressing him as a little girl whom I called Bonnie Jean. To this day I still remind him that, by cross-dressing

him, I made him what he is now. Though he doesn't appreciate the humor of this, his wife does, bless her heart.

any events happened to us while we were living in that tiny shack of a house, whose tar-paper siding tried to look like brick and miserably failed. While mother was expecting our sister, I used to take the coal

expecting our sister, I used to take the coal shuttle out to the pile at the back of the blacksmith shop and fill it up to keep the pot-bellied stove in the living room going. One day I walked in from one of these refueling trips. Mother was standing over the kitchen table cutting dumplings to be cooked later. I sneaked up behind her and put my dirty coal-dusted hands in front of her face. To my surprise, she promptly fainted. That was the last time I ever tried such a trick. Believe me, when you can't sit down for several days at a stretch, you learn quickly when you have done something wrong.

After Sandra Lynne was born, Mother and Daddy both worked at the hosiery mill. Once in a while, they would end up on the same shift. This meant that I was left at home alone with William and Sandra Lynne. One night our parents were on the grave-yard shift. Two o'clock in the morning, I heard a horrible yowling outside. To me, it sounded like a woman screaming as though in tremendous pain. The hairs on my neck and arms stood up. Since I was responsible for my siblings, I forced myself to be brave and investigate the noises Ι Systematically, I looked out all of the windows, most of which were covered with only roll-up shades. When I peeked out the window in my parents' bedroom, I saw this sleek black creature trying to get into the chicken pen. The chickens were running around, squawking, flapping their wings, and trying to find a way to escape. Whatever it was, this animal was doing a good job of climbing the chicken wire. The only thing I could think of was to lure him away from the baby chicks.

Daddy had taught me the rudiments of firing his double-barrel shotgun. I had learned to place the barrel somewhere, without, of course, pointing, so it would be steady, cock the hammer, and pull the trigger. These lessons were only for scaring intruders away.

Well, I loved those baby chicks (even though we eventually ate most of them when they became stewing hens so that, for years afterwards, I couldn't look a chicken in the face, cooked or uncooked). Taking that old trusty shotgun, I raised the window a few inches, inserted the barrel, and pulled the window back down on the barrel—tight. I sat down on the floor, positioned the shotgun at my shoulder, cocked it, and let go with both barrels. I heard an almighty racket from the chicks as I went sliding backwards, hitting the far wall. When I crawled back to the window and looked out, the intruder was gone. But my back end was full of splinters (the floors, in this house, were not finished). The gun was still smoking.

When my parents woke me the next morning, I expected to be hailed a hero. But no, I was accused of "messing" with the shotgun and killing at least a dozen chickens that would have to be plucked right then and there. (If you were poor like us, you saved every piece of meat you could find. Most of the time we were lucky to have beans and cornbread.) Also, I had done the outhouse in by peppering the outside of the structure with hundreds of buckshot. I was forced to pluck out each ball, one by one, with a pocket knife. My mother plucked out the splinters from my butt with as much care as I devoted to the buckshot. And both she and Daddy told me I had been seeing things. There was no such animal as the one I had described scaling the chicken wire.

However, for once in my life, I was vindicated. Several weeks later, the local farmers and people like us who kept chickens, a cow or two, or other domesticated animals, got together at the general store and decided to catch that black SOB that was killing off their livestock and pets. They gathered up guns and supplies. Going into the forest, known as the Gravel Pit, these people were determined to stop the killer. Four days later, they returned with a panther secured to a thick tree trunk which was carried over the men's shoulders. Mother apologized once she saw the animal. Daddy never did.

pleasant recollection—one that will live in my mind for a long time—was "attending picture-show night." As we became more affluent, mother and we children would walk the railroad tracks to town on Saturday night to see the latest movie. Invariably, it either featured a Lash LaRue western or a Bella Lugosi horror film.

Late one night, we had just gotten home.

Making our final trip to the outhouse, moth er stretched out her arms and yelled at us to stop. There was a snake in the path ahead Due to clouds, there wasn't much light that night. But you could definitely see a darl form lying right where she indicated. She told me to go around the house, find the rake, and bring it back to her. With rake it hand, she beat that snake until there was no possible way it could have survived.

The next morning the three of us were awakened by Mother screaming. We all rai out to help her. Many different scenario flashed through my head as to what could have been happening. Mother never took or like that even when Daddy was being mean to her.

We found her in the middle of the path to the outhouse. She was crying and shaking William and Sandra Lynne clung to me frightened by how their competent, hard working, calm mother was acting. Finally, got her attention long enough to ask he what was wrong. Through red-rimmed eyes she looked at me and pointed to where she had killed the snake the night before.

"I killed the belt to my best Sunday dress, she said. That was an understatement—i was her only Sunday dress. And now I could understand this acute grief. Mother didn' have enough money to buy a whole new out fit. All she could do was hope and pray that she might luck up onto another belt that would complement her best dress.

* * *

Many other scary and amusing episode occurred during the first fifteen years of my life in Mississippi. Later, after we had to move to Memphis, Tennessee, our mothe and father were divorced. Everything changed. You couldn't do things in Memphis that had happened so naturally in Grenada and Bastesville. Our lives wern never the same again.

However, I keep all these early memorie locked up in my mind, pulling them out to share and enjoy with William and Sandra Lynne. Our childhood was a time of great joy as well as, too often, sadness. Still, non of us feels compelled to forget or put a shint on those memories. They will always remain vivid. And they will continue to remind us of who we are and how far we've come.

Virginia A. Deweese lives in Hammond, Indiana.

Indiana

from the dunesweep
of the north
where marram grass
and bearberry grow
on hillsides
of sand and sun,
to the high bluffs
of the south
where the mighty Ohio
powers down from the Alleghenies,
Indiana lies sprawled
like a restless giant

from the catalyst crackers of the Calumet, to the historical monuments of Indianapolis to the stern
German log village of New Harmony,
Indiana stretches through cities and towns of the past and the future

from fields
given to the ripeness
of pumpkin and corn,
to the serpentine winding
of Sugar Creek
through forests
of maple and beech,
to the crimsons and golds
of autumn's Brown County,
Indiana is a creature
of vibrant bright moods

from steelworker
to farmer,
from fisherman
to timberman,
from astronaut
and engineer
to ecologist,
Indiana's people
are the progeny
of glacier
and prairie,
of talent and ongoing hope

—Charles B. Tinkham Hammond, Indiana

The Sacred

There is a hunger in the heart of man A hunger that demands a sense of awe He searches for the sacred when he can It's more emotion than a love of law.

He needs to worship, look to the divine A reason to fall down upon his knees A mystic place where he can build a shrine To share the dogma that his faith decrees.

He wants to know that there's a higher force A force that's more intelligent than he He needs to feel the energy, the source Of his creation, all that he can see.

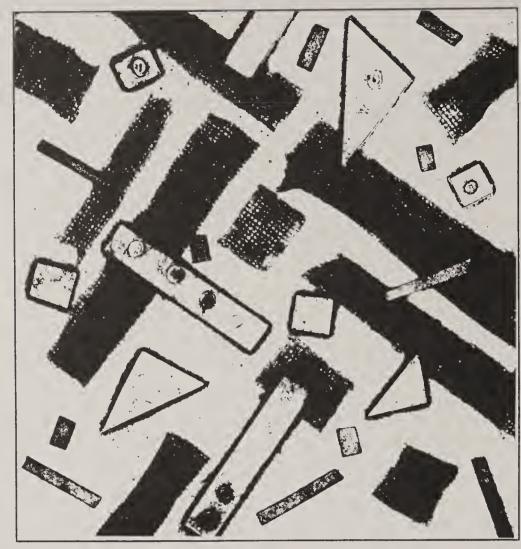
Man has a need to worship at God's feet Without the sacred, he is incomplete.

—Laura Ruben Hammond, Indiana



hoto by hap

"Scraps" by Sandra Jensen



VANYA'S REFRIGERATOR

by Daniel M. Jaffe

anya picked sharp crusts from the corners of his eyes until the skin began to peel and he winced. Then he pressed the knobby fingers of one hand against the back of his neck, massaged the other across his stomach where the throb and burning felt milder than they had yesterday. The dry fuzz that had coated his mouth when he fell asleep had almost melted away by now like bread mold wiped with a moist towel. There was nothing, he thought, like a moonshine vodka hangover to remind you that you were alive.

Vanya smacked his chapped lips, ran finger tips over the dirty blond mustache that curled into his mouth, sat up, belched and tasted lard from last night's supper of fried potatoes. He shoved aside his tattered blanket that had become wet from drips of rain leaking through the roof he'd been intending to fix. As he leaned over the bed, Vanya felt an old man's twinge in his young man's lower back. He lifted black pants from the floor, heard them tear on nail heads protruding from floorboards. He'd been meaning to hammer them down.

Without a sigh, he stood and rummaged about his grey pine dresser for thread, nudged aside a pair of eyeglasses he'd found on a bench in Kirzhach's town square and had brought home in case his eyes were ever to deteriorate; he poked through bits of wire he'd picked up here and there, and finally came across a needle trailing a few centimeters of black thread that he'd saved after having sewn the previous hole in his pants.

He moved to the window—the sun was high and bright and, far away on the horizon, yesterday's grey clouds hovered like wolves exhausted from a dawn hunt and feeding. Vanya stitched one big loop of thread through the sides of the tear, pulled the hole closed, tied knot after knot then bit off the end, spat it out onto the floor. The repair would, of course, be visible just above the knee, but, thought Vanya, who looked at knees?

He lifted *Pravda* off the corner wooden chair and folded page one against the inner sole of his right shoe; he shrugged, thinking that Gorbachev's *Pravda* filled the hole just as well as Brezhnev's ever had. Vanya scuffed over to his tiny kitchen, pried up a

loose floorboard, felt around among rubbe grubs, spider webs and hard-packed di until his callused finger tips touched meta refreshingly cold in summer. He pulled o the metal box, lifted its rusty lid, and stuffe hundred-ruble notes into his pants pocke stepped outside to draw up a bucket of wat from the well; after taking a long gulp, he s out for the center of town.

He had finally saved enough money to be a new refrigerator.

is old one had broken down year ago and since then he been working extra hard: addition to his long-standir job of sweeping the town administrative buildings, of emptyir papers, cigarette butts and gristle from trabins, and, once every few weeks, of scooling other people's loose excrement and galicky vomit from clogged toilets, he'd becearning money by working the land behin his house.

Just before Vanya's mother died five yea ago, she'd sold two-thirds of their house order to pay off children of now-dead friend from whom she'd borrowed money to bi the house in the first place. Alla and Sasha, blue-eyed couple in their late twenties, pa Vanya's mother a fair sum both for their pa of the house and the right to farm the unus half-acre plot behind it, although the Stat of course, still owned the actual land. Sasl spent long days fixing roads and sewers nearby Chernogolovka, a town whose maj industry was the adaptation of illicit acquired Western technology to Soviet mi tary purposes; Alla was so busy raising h two boys and little girl that she, too, lack time to work the land, so it lay fallow.

Then Vanya's refrigerator chugged its larumble. In an unusual burst of initiative Vanya became curious to see whether the government's new economic campaignealled *Perestroika* could work for him, so made a deal with his neighbors: if Alla and Sasha paid for seeds and fertilizer and equipment, Vanya would farm the land, wou grow flowers and herbs, and he'd take the trouble of traveling to Moscow to sell the profits. Every spring day after wor Vanya tilled and hoed, shoveled manure and

way pigeons and crows. Throughout the immer, he'd travel once a week for about vo hours by bus to Moscow, and outside the DNKH metro station, seated on a wooden rate beside country women from other iwns, Vanya would sell bunches of carnaons and daisies, little bundles of parsley and dill. By the end of June, expenses were net and, by August, Vanya had saved what e deemed enough to buy a refrigerator.

Approaching the end of his block, he ralked around the dirt road's deep pothole, crater with a puddle, beside which Sasha's rhite goat had stretched out to take the sumner sun. No one bothered to fill in the pit, idn't need to really—Vanya walked on the oft, muddy tire tracks circling left into rera's yard, looked at others curving right nto Zina's.

He strolled by small wooden houses with plit and broken window trim, passed yards illed with wood piles among tall grasses nd weeds, prowling cats and pecking hens. Nearly every yard was bordered by a halfotten fence erected in an effort to protect what little the residents owned—precisely because, thought Vanya, for the last seventy rears the Communist Party had been telling hem that they should share all that they had. Vanya believed that, despite the fences, the citizens of Kirzhach were neighbors who could pull together in an emergency, like the ime everyone feared invasion by flying saucers, huge blue airborne discs that suddenly illuminated the night sky; neighbors knocked on neighbors' doors and all huddled together in houses or on the street. The residents felt a strange calm in watching the discs hover low and do nothing but fly away—according to some, in the direction of Chernogolovka, although no one later heard talk of anything having landed there. At least the community of Kirzhach had survived unscathed, a testament to the town's cohesion.

hen Vanya told Alla that his refrigerator had completely broken down, she tucked a few strands of blond hair back into her bun and immediately volunteered to squeeze his butter into her refrigerator; but of course, she explained, she had no spare room for anything else, not with three children to feed. On occasion, Vanya would impose on Fera

to store a dish of yogurt in her refrigerator, and although her upper lip would twitch to reveal a silver-capped eyetooth that glistened like a fang, she would agree without a frown; and after giving a soft cluck of her tongue, turkey-necked Zina would always consent to keep a piece of Vanya's cheese in her refrigerator. Other neighbors helped out, too. But Vanya felt embarrassed—beggar-like—when knocking on neighbors' doors and interrupting their suppers each time he craved a dollop of sour cream.

His new refrigerator, like his old one, would be small—he only had a closet-sized kitchen, after all, and besides, how would he fill a large refrigerator, what with his single man's diet of bread, potatoes, cabbage and onions, sometimes beets, all of which kept just fine on the shelf above the stove? But a refrigerator of some kind was a necessity he did so enjoy butter on his bread, yogurt, cheese and sour cream. And, rare as the occasion had been last spring, meat did, once or twice, show up in the grocery store in the square, and would have spoiled quickly if not put in a refrigerator at home, considering that it had already traveled from some other town's slaughterhouse in an unrefrigerated truck.

Tol'ko Po rodazha Passportam—Sale Only Per Passports—he read on a handpainted sign above the department store's door. Pressing his fingers against the internal passport he always carried in his left trouser pocket, Vanya nodded at the clever idea: the store would sell only to those proving residence in the Vladimir region, where Kirzhach was located. In other words, he thought, Muscovites Keep Out! After seventy years of centralizing the economy, requiring everyone in Russia's countryside to ship to Moscow the finest meat and chicken and fish, the capital now prohibited out-of-towners—those who had produced the food in the first place—from purchasing foodstuff in Moscow. How dare they! So what if there wasn't enough food both for Muscovites and all the millions of shoppers who'd travel there weekly by bus and train from surrounding towns? Why should Muscovites fatten up at everyone else's expense? The department store's policy was only a minor local victory, Vanya knew, since no one from Moscow would travel to Kirzhach to shop

anyway, but still, Muscovites' dacha communities peppered the nearby countryside—just let the vacationers come here and try to buy a refrigerator!

Vanya approached the familiar first-floor salesman, whose white smock, stained in various spots from sweat and grease, stretched tight around his barrel-like physique. Vanya stated his interest in purchasing a refrigerator; the salesman pulled a sheet of paper from a desk drawer and, copying from Vanya's internal passport, added his name to a list.

"I have the money now," Vanya said. "I can pay today."

In a voice sounding to Vanya like the bleat of an annoyed pig, the salesman declared that Vanya should keep his money. "You're on a waiting list."

"How long?"

"Twenty years."

Vanya's mouth fell open in amazement. He knew that times were hard and he'd anticipated a delay of several months, possibly even of half a year. But this?

"You're lucky," added the salesman. "Today's the last day we accept names on the list at all."

Vanya stared at the man, a walking fist with experience in squashing human flies, then instinctively offered him a bribe.

The salesman wet his thick lips, shook his head. "There's nothing I can do. Can you imagine? Not even for a bribe!" He turned away to the next customer, a gaunt woman mumbling about an oven.

ets of hot perspiration shot out beneath Vanya's arms, trickled down his sides. There was no other department store in town. Vanya thought to yell, to stomp and scream, to slap his palms against his thighs or crash his head through a wall. He calmed down when he remembered there

As the gaunt woman left the store muttering obscenities, the salesman said to Vanya, "We just got in a shipment of winter boots. Upstairs."

was more moonshine at home.

Vanya nodded. Last winter he hadn't been able to find boots anywhere and, in order to keep out the snow and cold, had been forced to tie rags around his ankles. He climbed the wooden stairs, looked at the wall covered with rows of rubber boots, all in the same extra-large size that would fit only when



stuffed with newspapers or balled socks, and he bought two pair. He'd have time to replace the money he was spending, to save up again for the refrigerator. Unless...

He left the store and headed home.

Unless he took a bus to Moscow. Maybe there he could hunt down a store with a shorter waiting list . . . But maybe not. Didn't all stores buy their refrigerators from the same factory? It didn't matter whether you ordered one from Moscow or Novosibirsk, did it? And even if he did find a refrigerator, how would he get it home to Kirzhach? He'd have to find someone who owned a truck, then he'd have to rent it, and since he didn't know how to drive, he'd have to hire a driver. Vanya had no idea how to go about doing all that. Besides, what if the Moscow stores were prohibited from selling refrigerators to non-Muscovites these days? Anything was possible.

Foreign? Vanya fingered the rubles in his pocket, then let loose a guffaw. There weren't enough carnations and dill in the entire Vladimir region to buy foreign appliances. He laughed aloud once more. He stopped his walk, looked at the oversized black metal bust of Lenin in the center of the town square, shook his hands in frustration at it the way he'd seen old women shake their bony hands at heaven.

Clouds now prowled overhead and Vanya

shivered beneath a drizzle. In the square's grocery store, Vanya bought some half-black apples, but turned away from imported Turkish tea wrapped in pretty purple and yellow packets—everyone had heard rumors that the tea was radioactive. He read the sign at the milk counter saying that due to shortages, milk was available only for children, and then only by a doctor's prescription.

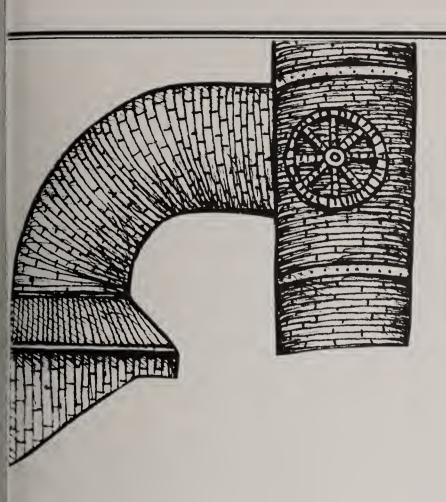
He walked slowly home in the drizzle, the newspaper in his shoe as soggy as his hair, and he exchanged antagonistic baaa's with Sasha's goat still lying beside the pothole despite the wet.

Since Vanya had no children, he would not be buying milk in the foreseeable future. He wouldn't need a refrigerator for milk. Come to think of it, he couldn't remember exactly when meat had arrived in town last-no need to buy a refrigerator just for a contingency. Anyway, even before his old refrigerator had broken down, he couldn't rely on it, not given the poor electrical system in town that blacked out as often as it worked. And he shouldn't be so antisocial, he scolded himself-knocking on a neighbor's door at dinnertime wasn't the end of the world, and wasn't it true that every so often after he knocked, Alla or Zina or Fera would invite him in for a tastier borscht than he knew how to prepare? Besides, easily half the year the weather was cold enough to keep provisions on his window sill, and so what if he had to wait a little for the cheese or butter or sour cream to thaw before he could cut or scoop or eat them? Actually, it was just as well that refrigerators were not available.

The smell of mildewed towels, unwashed clothes, and a pot in the sink encrusted with grey remains of last week's kasha porridge all assaulted Vanya the moment he stepped inside his one-room home. He dropped the apples into his cracked, white sink, sat down on his bed that was wet from the leak in the roof, looked up to see what needed patching, then stood and pulled the bed aside, positioned it over the protruding nails of the floorboards, thereby eliminating the need to repair either the roof or the floor.

He pulled a half bottle of vodka from the top of his pine dresser, took a swig, wiped his mustache with the back of his hand. Yes, thought Vanya, he should forget about the refrigerator entirely. With all the money he'd saved up, he could afford to buy an extra two pairs of boots and whatever else the department store might stock throughout the fall. And best of all, come next spring. Vanya wouldn't have to break his back working the plot of land. No, he wouldn't For all he cared, it could rot.

Daniel M. Jaffe lives in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.



Violet

Time enough to sort out snarl of old grass from new, to gather up the twigs, the cones, the needles sharp through gloves.

Time enough at the overhanging pine to hold myself in a moment of uncommon blue.

Deep in the shadow of its own clustered leaves is discovery always as if for the first time:

a brave new purity in cold ground, an amethyst glowing in earth's opening gem box, a simple flower tuned to the music and minerals of time.

Time enough to wear it unplucked as a nosegay in my face. Time enough to speak its language when you come home. "I return your love."

—Ida Fasel Denver, Colorado

Life's Dear Fuel

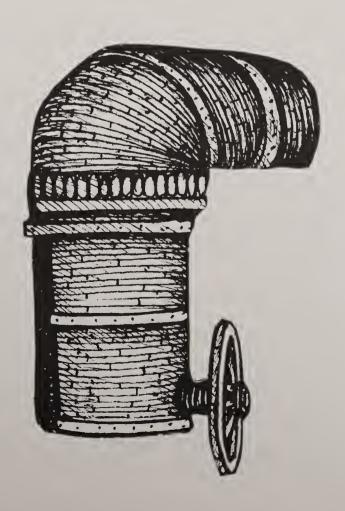
Time resolves the irresolute for me, though seldom to my liking, as it stamps more years upon my face reminding me of time's strident strength and that I have less than half a tank left of life's dear fuel, it is now more important than ever that I not be fuel foolish.

—Rod Farmer Farmington, Maine

Black Gold

Down, down, beneath the moonscape of Antarctica where seals once played protected by drifts of distance, walls of cold, oil drills grind amid fields of skulls and rusted hulls of sunken ships. Derricks grunt through silent nights of light and days of darkness until black gold gushes earth's aortic blood, until polar creatures have no place, and all that's left to claim is the wide eye of the sun.

--Constance Vogel Glenview, Illinois





THE REVEREND

by Shirley Jo Moritz

hat Sunday morning, eleven years ago, a strange man was seated behind the pulpit. His legs were crossed, his hands were folded, and he was gazing skyward. Soon, our interim pastor introduced this man as Reverend Dwenger, who was here to give us a trial sermon. For a moment, the Reverend's red-hued complexion took on an even deeper shade. Stepping to the pulpit, he bent his head and said, "May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts, minds and souls be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord. Amen."

As Reverend Dwenger delivered his sermon, I listened closely. Now and again, he inserted a dramatic or humorous illustration of his point, offsetting the seriousness of God's Word for just a moment. I was impressed by how easily he kept my attention. Apparently, the whole congregation felt the same way I did. They looked at him steadily and with growing admiration. That very day, we called the Reverend to be our minister, and he accepted. I was happy that the church now had a young pastor with a growing family, a man that most of us could identify with and relate to.

As I worked on various church comm tees, I became aware of his willingness please and of his ability to accept construtive criticism. Periodically, for example, will designate a Sunday as an "ask the mi ister day," on which the congregation writ out questions concerning the needs and wifare of the church.

One morning, he read, "Why don't ylook up from the pulpit more often whyou're giving the sermon?" I was rathembarrassed that someone had dared to a the question, but the Reverend gave it a feseconds' thought, and then he grinne "Well, I don't know why I don't do that," said. "Thank you for calling it to my attetion. I'll see what improvement I can make And the next Sunday, sure enough, he deliered his sermon with much more eye contathan usual.

At another "congregational feedbac meeting, the question was asked, "W don't you stand in the foyer on Sund mornings to greet us as we arrive?" To the answered, "By nature, I tend to be sl But if this suggestion is important to t congregation, I'll be there." And on the ne Sunday, he was, and still is, offering I smile and handshake. His greeting is op and warm.

During church family gatherings and c faith retreats, his outgoing personality a attractive sense of humor override his sh ness. During football season, for examp conversation often turns to good-natur teasing concerning the Reverend's colle alma mater. Someone may say, "Reverer those wimpy *Boilermakers* of yours do stand a chance against Notre Dame!" "How about including Purdue in yo prayers today, Reverend? They're gon need it!"

But if you want to see him blush, mentithe week of Vacation Bible School that helped supervise a few years ago. I dressed as the "keeper of the well"—actuly a well made from wood with a bucket water inside, standing near the parking land All morning, all week, the minister led to children to his well. What fun the students had taking turns trinking water from a dipper! Reverend Dwenger beamed as he supervised. But he had a surprise coming. The next week, Sunday school was practically empty. Nearly every child had come down with chicken pox! Although the Reverend could not be held personally responsible for the outbreak, he accepted our banter about the incident with good humor.

ometimes, the Christmas spirit is a last-minute experience for me, but I recall one year when the feeling came early. At a church social event, part of the entertainment included a solo, sung by a fellow member. As the woman sang from the choir toft, her voice floated down to us like that of an angel. We were deeply moved. In fact, the minister's wife, Jackie, was so moved by the performance that she rushed upstairs to the soloist. We couldn't help overhearing her joyful and almost tearful congratulations to the singer.

I don't know why, but I had expected to see the Reverend indicate to his wife his disapproval of her public display of emotion. Instead, when she came down, he grinned at her and put his arm around her shoulder. At that moment, I realized the Reverend was graciously accepting the complete person in his wife, just the way he accepts and supports each individual of his congregation.

The Sunday he preached on a more intense way to pray has become fixed in my mind. I was raised in a home that never openly asked a blessing, even at meals. After I listened carefully to the Reverend's explanation of each phase of prayer, talking to God became more personal and satisfying for me, day by day.

Once, in a Bible Study session, Reverend Dwenger said in his concerned way, "Just because I'm a minister doesn't mean that I don't need to study the Bible—I do! That's why I like to attend this class as often as I can. But I have to watch myself. I tend to be wordy and take over the teacher's job. And I don't want to interfere with the growth of the class! Besides, you hear enough from me on Sunday morning." I found that I enjoy study-

ing beside him, as much as I enjoy learning from him.

By request of the congregation, once or twice a year the Reverend dons the costume of a Biblical character he has thoroughly researched. For me, his most memorable skit was that involving the Devil.

Far from shy, the Devil strode swiftly and confidently into the sanctuary from a side aisle. Wearing a yellow leisure suit, his hair slicked back in a style unlike his own, the Reverend portrayed the Devil as a clever "con man" trying to win mankind from God. Peering over wire-rimmed spectacles and pointing a finger, he threatened our very souls. But then he admitted being powerless in the face of God. I thought to myself, this is as close to the Devil as I want to come! Although the Reverend is very effective at the pulpit, his remarkable dramatic skits give life to the Word.

Recently, impressed at the way Reverend Dwenger has been progressing, I said to him, "Any habit is hard to break. I marvel at your many accomplishments since you have made an effort to overcome your shyness." With a twinkle in his eye, he said, "Yes, Shirley, I marvel at it, too. But then, through God, all things are possible."

Over the years, since Reverend Dwenger came to lead our church, he has shown God's love to all who have come to know and admire him. On many occasions, he has reminded me of the woman who washed Jesus' feet. In dealing with the public, he, too, humbles himself.

Furthermore, the Reverend feels that every human being possesses at least one of the traits of Jesus. Therefore, he looks for such a trait in everyone he encounters, and he appreciates what he discovers. And because of his kindness and understanding, his power to lead is at once evident.

Through the years, I have come to highly regard and respect the Reverend's humanness as he continues to fill my need for a pastor, a counselor, a comforter and a brother-like friend.

Shirley Jo Moritz lives in Merrillville, Indiana.



hiscus" by Sandra Jensen

THIS WAS SNOW

by Joanna Yas

April 17, 1994

I want to thank you again in writing for coming out for the funeral. There's something about a letter that makes things feel more official, permanent. I wish we had had more time to talk, but just seeing you there was a comfort. Dear Beth, Yours is a face from my whole life, not just my life here with Frank. When we moved out here, we made friends together, "our friends." So, now that he's gone, I feel as if they see me as a half. Of course, they don't act that way, but I know

they feel awkward about relating to me as one person.

Anyway, write back and tell me how you're doing. Thanks again.

Love, Clara

April 22, 1994

Beth,

I know I'm writing again before you've had a chance to respond to my last letter, something I don't usually do. But letter writing has been so comforting to me lately, a kind of comfort my journal doesn't provide. My journal has such an immense audience, no matter how hard I try to keep it buried under my sweaters. Part of the audience is me, in the future. I can too easily imagine myself, days, months, or even years from now, leafing through the pages, and thinking, "What an idiot I was then!" or "How could I have made the same mistake so many times?" And then there are all the people who will read it after my death: my mother (if she survives me, God forbid), friends, old lovers (they, after all, fill most of the pages), or maybe even children I have by then. I'd love to read my mother's journal. But I don't know which I'm afraid of more: my journal being read by all these people, or by no one, except maybe a stranger at a tag sale, or the garbage man.

A letter only has a one-person audience. This letter, for example, will soon be part of your history, because your name is on the envelope. It's yours. The people who survive you will read the letters in your drawer looking for clues, secrets about your life that may be revealed by the writer. They'll pay no attention to what I say about myself.

Speaking of me, I'm holding things together pretty well. I brought some of Frank's clothes to a consignment shop today. Just out of habit, I suppose, because that's where I've often brought my unwanted stuff. Stupid. I should have given his things away to charity. As soon as the woman behind the counter said, "So, you'll be back in a couple of weeks to find out if anything's sold?" I knew I had

Write soon, Clara

May 2, 1994

Dear Clara,

So, now this becomes part of your history, right? I'd better watch what I

Stop thanking me so much for coming out there! Of course I wanted to be with you. I'm only sorry that it had to be a funeral and that I haven't come out to say about you.

I realized when I was there that I didn't really know Frank very well. I don't know what the two of you were like together. Of course you'll never be just a half of anything to me, no matter how well I know your boy friends. Boy friends? Is visit on happier occasions. that what I just said? All of a sudden, we're fourteen and drinking a coke at the drugstore, instead of thirty with jobs and... Now that Frank's dead, it feels even stranger to call him that. There's something about his death that makes me feel

It's funny that you brought his clothes to a consignment shop. Maybe you're not willing to part with all of him at once. Now you know that he's hangas if you and he were married. ing there, and every time you go back, there'll be a shirt or two less of him on the rack. Or else, you wont' go back for a long time, when you're sure he's all

gone.

I'll speak to you soon, Beth

May 4, 1994

Mom,

Do you remember a book you gave me when I was a kid called "About Dying"? I think a hamster of mine had died and you gave it to me to help me understand what had happened. I was about seven. No one else had died yet.

I remember that the book was illustrated with stark black and white photographs, two of which have been appearing in my head lately. One is a picture of a dead bird sprawled across the page. This was Snow, was written in huge letters at the top of the page. The other is a picture of a smiling old man sitting in a chair: This was Grandpa. I remember wondering if I was supposed to feel the same way about both. At that point, it was only the hamster and...anyway, I'm curious to see how I feel about that book now. I know you never throw anything away, so would you send it to me if you can find it? It's probably in the attic. Thanks.

> I love you, Clara

May 4, 1994

I just wrote to my mom, asking her to send me a book from my childhood, a book that explains death to kids. Am I crazy? Do I need a children's self-help book to get me through this? Anyway, while Dear Beth, I was writing this letter to Mom, I found myself wanting to tell her about something I've never told anyone. I caught myself, though. I'll tell you instead.

When I was about thirteen, I had recurring visions of dead bodies hanging from trees and lying on the street. At first I thought that everyone else, meaning all the adults around me, could see them, too, that the bodies were one of those things they all agreed not to talk about. On drives we used to take together, I began to study my parents' faces for signs that they could see what I saw. They never revealed a thing; Mom smiled at the landscape or played with the radio, Dad hummed and flicked his ashes out the window. They see them, I used to think, but they see the bodies all the time, so they're immune to them, like bums on the street corner.

I had been let in on a big-adult secret, I thought. Like sex. Except that I could see it on their faces when sex was around. They would frown at people kissing on the street, and whip past a dirty movie on TV. My father would blush and look away if he saw me coming out of the bathroom, wearing

Those visions were comforting to me, as strange as that may sound. They weren't people I only a towel. His little girl with breasts. knew, or me. They reminded me that I was alive in the back seat of my father's car. The sadness I felt was not about their deaths, but the way that they had been left out to rot. No one cared enough to comb their hair or put on their favorite dress. It was as if they were flung there, onto the branches and the pavement by a giant slingshot. Maybe by someone who thought bodies lose their weight when

I'm sorry about all this, Beth. I hope you don't think I'm going mad. I'll write a clearer letter soon.

Love, Clara

May 10, 1994

Dear Clara,

Well, here's the book you asked for. I'm not sure why you want it, but I certainly don't need it around here.

Are you spending time with your friends, dear? You probably need them now. Keeping busy will make things easier.

I certainly understand what you're going through. I'm just glad it didn't happen after years and years, when it was too late for you to move on. Which is how I felt when your father died. But you have so much ahead of you.

Not to sound like a monster, but you never struck me as being that serious about Frank. At least, you never spoke of marrying him. These are different times, I know. Your father and I married so quickly. It was what we were supposed to do. Not that I have any regrets. We had plenty of time together. And I've always been glad that he stuck around

I hope you're taking care of yourself.

Love, Mom

May 14, 1994

So, it must have been lots of fun growing up in a house full of books about dead birds. Did you also have About Sex? When I read about it in your letter, I kept wondering how your Dear Clara, mom is dealing with Frank's death. I remember hearing from you that she didn't like him very much. But she would never say that, right? She seems like one to pretend that everything's okay, that unpleasantries are better left untalked about. I guess that makes sense in terms of those visions you had, too. You had to "see" some of those unmentionables, because you certainly couldn't bring them up at dinner.

Speaking of dinner, I've spent today recovering from a dinner party here last night. Too many people, not enough chairs. I've never been too good at this entertaining thing. It's times like last night when I feel so jealous of your life, away from the city. And you're in a new place, especially now. There are so many people here, so many obligations, rules. I always manage to break them, but accidentally. I serve the wrong kind of wine, forget to invite my boss's sister-in-law. So, do you want a roommate? I'm joking, I guess, but I really am going to come out there again soon.

Are things getting better for you? Call me if you need to.

Love, Beth

May 22 1994

Dear Mom,

Thanks for sending the book. It looks so new! Before I read your note, I thought you had bought a new copy. I don't think I read it too often. I must've thrown it away after the hamster. Jennifer Levine was the next one, but I probably didn't think I needed it by then. Do you remember her? She died in sixth grade, choked on her own vomit during an asthma attack. We used to play together when we were much younger, but by sixth grade she was too cool for me. She was the fastest runner and the best soccer player and she was very popular and she hated me. She was sort of ugly, though. I felt sorry for her at times, because I knew that being a fast runner wouldn't help her get a date when we got to high school and that her popular friends would drop her like she had dropped me. But still, in sixth grade, I hated her. So when she died, I faked some tears for my classmates and skipped the funeral. I remember that you went, with all of the other PTA moms, but you didn't make me go with you. Other girls she had dropped went to the funeral and cried the whole time. In school that week, it was as if the teacher had promised an "A" to the best mourner. So, she was the first person to die. But she didn't really count. By sixth grade, she was already dead to me.

Thanks again for the book, Mom, and for listening to me remember these things. I'm doing okay. I'll speak to you soon.

> Much Love, Clara

June 5, 1994

Dear Beth,

I've been thinking a lot lately about something you wrote a couple of letters ago. About Frank's death making us seem as if we were married. You're so right. But it wasn't just his death; it was his sickness in general. We were really only together for about a year before he found out about the cancer, so the last two years for us were full of his illness. We couldn't get married or have children, and we certainly couldn't break up. I've been wondering lately when we would've split up if he had been healthy. Is it awful of me to be thinking like that?

Mom wrote recently that she thinks I'm lucky that Frank died before I got too attached to him, like she was with Dad. I was so angry with her for saying that, and for making a comparison between Frank and Dad in which Frank comes up short. But it made me realize that it was partly his illness which kept me from getting too attached. I was his nurse for so long. Everything between us during that time was numbed. And now, thinking about what would have happened if he had gotten better, I wonder if we would have been able to get the feeling back. I suppose it's

I want to be able to say that I'm completely lost and alone without Frank, like Mom is without Dad. That is how I'm supposed to feel. I am not supposed to wonder if the cancer is what kept us together. I want to say that his death hit me like a rock in the head, that regardless of all the time I had to prepare, it was much worse than I had expected. I'm not supposed to feel that his death was anti-climatic, that I didn't feel too different on that day from the day before that or the week before that. Except that my pulse (which had been racing for what seemed like weeks) slowed down. I began to taste the food in my mouth again. I realized that the milk I had been

I hope that all is well with you. Please write again.

Love. Clara

Joanna Yas lives in New York, New York.



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I hope that all is well with you. Please write again.

Love, Clara

Joanna Yas lives in New York, New York.

Zapotec

Woman

still
I see you, mother, sitting little and hunched and brown in the cramped doorway of the cathedral-your hand extended toward us-

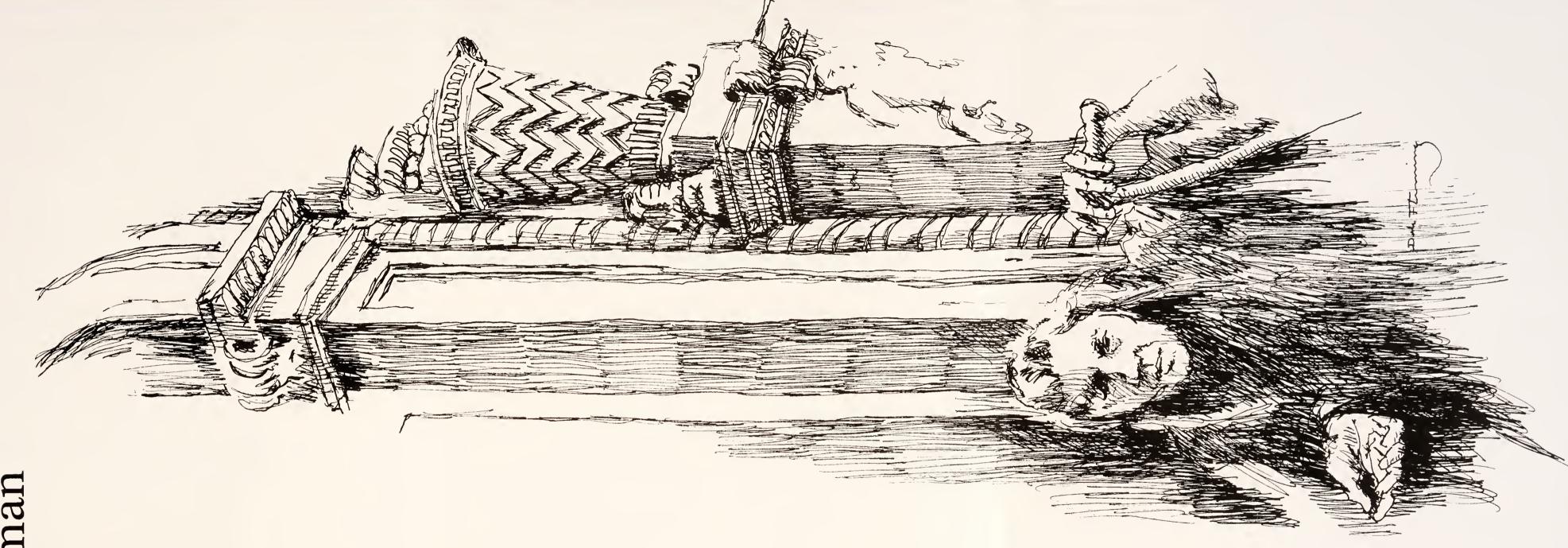
inside there is gold, and diamond embedded in the gold outside
there is warmth
of sun
and the blossoming
of yellow flowers
and the many
colors
in the laughter
of the children

mother,
I can see the bones
in your hand,
I can see
the loose threads
of your dress,
I can hear the avalanche
of silence
in your ears,
I can see the pride
of Zapotec
in your eyes

mother,
you are thin
as the wind,
and you sit
in the doorway
of the world
and you are
a warrior
of the revolution,
the steady helpmate
of ideas
and courage

mother,
may this blessing
be yours—
the blessing of all people

A who Timbles





Burying My Aunt

Es reigunt und meine kinde leigt in drusen'

Echoes of demise, I can hear stones strike her coffin. This simple porridge of dirt and rock returned to the Earth—its only hope for redemption lying in the mercy of seasons working their will against gravity. My aunt

has no such luck. Neither God nor gravity can erase the bitter distillation of her cancer.

Some ancient Hebrew sage considers it mitzvah—the family burying its dead. Rest assured, it's as brutal as it sounds in the pouring rain—

my wing-tips soaked and dirtied with mud, the mortar of decay. Rabbi Schwartz is certain God weeps for his servant. This may be so; however, a betting man would say the rotten luck of a December nor'easter. The rabbi, his eulogy the sweet fruit

of a thousand benedictions. We weep while he sows. Yet, no matter what inspires this man, I know my God has nothing to do with this. Some other God's cosmic blunder intruding from a parallel universe—leaving my aunt dead, me missing her.

—Jonathan M. Berkowitz New York, New York

'It's raining and my child is lying outside.

How Long Can We Stay?

"How long can we stay?" is the question which does not frame itself or find our lips.

We are smoke and steam and half-quenched coals.

A scratchy record rasps its bluesy-new strains, teases,

"You can't take that away from me"

But we whirr and fade—like cars passing in the vacant night.

—Phillip T. Egelston Jonesboro, Illinois

Asystole

Her face becomes pale as if she were a ghost. Her blood flows slower and slower; Her muscles lose their elasticity and start to become stiff.

Every nerve begins to lose its electrical charge.

Her mind becomes a haven of memories. Visions of flowers, rainbows, the blue of the sky.

She hears laughter, forgets old friendships and lovers.

She starts to savor every last breath as it slowly comes closer.

"Goodbye," she whispers as death becomes her.

—Nicole Baggarly Griffith, Indiana



Of Empires And Kazoos

Central square, Pecs, Hungary.
4-year-olds chasing pigeons,
school children playing on monuments,
taxi drivers waiting for their fares
and hoping they don't come
(so they can enjoy this scene a little longer).

At one end of the square stands a cathedral with its cross standing just over an Islamic crescent.

It once was a mosque—and before that a cathedral—testament to Hungary's troubled past.

Not 40 miles south of here, in what used to be Yugoslavia the clash of empires continues, children still die in these adult games, but here there is peace.

He is a blonde two-year-old strutting through our cafe the one where his father works. He has a child's eyes wide open and full of wonder. He has a child's smile liking the world he sees.

He swaggers up to us, smiling. My friend reaches into her purse and pulls out a red and yellow kazoo, hums a tune into it and gives it to him.

His smile broadens.

I didn't think
his smile could shine any brighter,
but it does.

Armies have marched through this land from Rome and Asia, from Turkey and Germany, from Russia and Austria.

They have laid waste to this land and killed its people.

But all the armies of all the empires have no power compared to the grace of the smile of a boy with a kazoo.

—Brian Forry Wallace Columbus, Ohio

The Irish Jockey

He recalled steeplechases the most that last night I left him on oxygen, sobbing on the elevator, his ghost given up, nurses later cooed, at ten o'clock. I already knew. Parking lot empty, I watched as the perky, orange moon tapped on his panes just as I got in my Volvo, his soul rising in strange sync with a siren's blast—the Banshee on track. "What graces await a groom in the hereafter? He can now curry winged mounts toting us from the tomb," said the priest. Every race since then, all ridden as a man possessed, I've won.

—Edward C. Lynskey Warrenton, Virginia

Moon, New Moon

The moon, the new moon on the end of the road swollen as a hot air balloon,

and me walking toward it mouth open, swallowing falling twilight.

Air in the hollows clung like a northern lake in September. You had been

gone days and days, it seemed. Thoughts of you chilled and floated away. The lake

gulped down the light of your image

and held cold hands around my neck, icy fingers in my ears.

For weeks I've tried to rekindle pieces of you lost then,

the lake cold as the hollows of the road this evening, love's touch losing

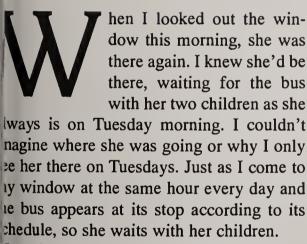
its breath. Except for the moon. You coming back in the red 4x4, the moon there waiting to be climbed into.

—Franco Pagnucci
Platteville, Wisconsin

hoto by hap

GOLD HOUSES

by Paul Holler



I noticed her a couple of months ago. I lways notice those things. When you're an ld, old woman, as I am, and your legs are ad, as mine are, you rarely leave your partment. You notice everything that hapens outside your window. A new face in the eighborhood is the highlight of your day. ou think about who these people are and hat brought them here. When I first saw e girl across the street, I guessed that she ad just moved into the neighborhood from lexico or Guatemala. I'd heard that a lot of tem have been coming in lately. She had at frightened smile on her face that they all ave when they come here with no English. know because I had that same smile when came here. I just came from a different ountry in a much different time.



But she seemed so young, waiting for the bus with no one but her two small children for company. Was I ever that young? I suppose I was a long, long time ago. But I didn't have children. That must make it very hard for her. I can see that by the way she struggles to keep her children in hand. They try to steal away from her, but she pulls them back before they can run into the street. Finally, she picks them up and holds them. From here it looks as though their weight will pull her to the ground before the bus gets here.

Last week, one of the children got out of the apartment. She couldn't have been more than three or so. I heard the door slam across the street and there she was, running up and down the sidewalk by herself. I waited for her mother to come running after her and, sure enough, out she came in her house dress and bare feet in the rain. As soon as the little one saw her mother, she hid underneath a car parked along the curb, smiling, enjoying her little trick. Her mother looked all around, calling her name. She looked so frightened. Finally, she saw the girl underneath the car, getting farther underneath it, laughing, having a grand time. Her mother reached underneath the car, grabbed her by the arm and scolded her in Spanish. Then the girl started to cry. She couldn't imagine what she had done wrong.

t was strange. All the while I was watching the little girl play underneath the car, I had the oddest feeling that I was her at some time. Everything looked so familiar, the little space underneath the car, the raindrops on the puddles in the street. Where had I seen that before? And then it came to me.

3 A.M.

The clock
has finally
stopped bleeding.
Its face
is a dizzy white
behind its
immaculate black hands
going so fast
barely moving.

—James Hawley
Diamond Bar, California

I closed my eyes and I was a little girl again in Poland. I was about six or seven and I was hiding under a porch with my friends. It was raining outside, and puddles were filling up the pits in the mud that the horses had made when they went by. We weren't hiding from the rain, though. We were hiding from Crazy Helena. It was under her porch that we were hiding, as a matter of fact.

Crazy Helena lived alone. She was the only one in the village who did. Whenever anyone looked into her eyes, she would curse and spit at him. She had a strange look about her. I think she was blind out of one eye. Her bad eye was a paler blue than her good eye and it wandered, probably without her knowing it. Her husband had been dead for a long time. There were many stories going around the village about how he met his end. I don't know if any of them were true. There were even a few people in the village who said that Crazy Helena had killed him, cut his throat with a saw because he had been unfaithful to her. I'll bet that taught him a lesson. Come to think of it, I don't think any of the men in the village were unfaithful after that story got around.

Many of the villagers thought that Crazy Helena was possessed by demons, and we children were taught to make a Sign of the Cross whenever we saw her. She always screamed and wailed and carried on in the marketplace whenever she felt slighted by anyone. Looking back, I think that was just her way of getting everyone else to leave her alone. But at the time, everyone thought she

was crazy and, since no one knew what it was to be crazy, everyone stayed away from her the same way people on the street stay away from the bag ladies now, as if their craziness were a disease.

One might wonder why we were under such a dangerous woman's porch. The answer is we dared each other, of course, as children do. Besides, we knew she was not at home. We weren't in any real danger of being found out but we pretended we were. The pretend danger was great fun.

But then, we didn't know at the time that the danger was real because the woman we saw in town who we thought was Crazy Helena was actually someone else. Crazy Helena herself was at home, right above us.

Just when we were bragging to each other about how brave we were to be where no one but Helena and we had ever been, we heard the door open and the floorboards squeak above us. We all looked at one another as if to say, "You got me into this! This is all your fault!"

ut we didn't say a word. We didn't even breathe. One booted foot came down in front of us, then the other. We turned to stone. Then suddenly we saw her face looking right into ours and we scrambled out from underneath the porch and ran for our lives, screaming all the way. "I'll get you!" she screamed after us.

I got out behind the others and then I tripped and fell. I felt Helena's claw on my shoulder. Then she lifted me up and clapped me underneath her arm. The last I saw of my friends was their forlorn faces staring at me the same way prisoners stare at a condemned man walking the last mile. Then I was alone in the cottage with Crazy Helena. She shut the door, sat me down on a bench by the fireplace and slammed the latch closed. I couldn't move, I was so afraid.

Helena didn't say a word for a long time. She just paced back and forth and stared at me. It was strange. She didn't seem angry at all. She seemed curious about me one moment and the next she almost seemed to be laughing at me. She was such a strange woman.

Finally, she said to me, "You know, if you weren't a little girl, I could bring you before the law for trespassing. As it is, I just might bring your parents before the law for not teaching you right from wrong."

I didn't say a word. I looked around me.

The little cottage was crowded with jars a spices and things that Helena used to can make her living. I had noticed before the she kept a candle lit by each window, all time, day and night. She told me another time that she did this to keep the evil on whoever they might be, from coming through the windows. The evil ones, so said, were afraid of light and always may the candles flicker when they were new Whenever Helena saw the candles flicked she made a Sign of the Cross before the eleones could get her. I smiled when she to me that. I was afraid of what might happy if I didn't.

"But I won't bring you before the law." S: poured out two cups of tea.

"Have some," she said. "Don't worry, won't turn you into a frog."

I smiled a little and took the cup.

"A caterpillar maybe," she said, "but no frog."

I gasped. Then she said, "Just kiddir What's your name, child?"

"Marta," I said.

"So, little Marta, just what do the other say about me?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, yes you do, you lying sack of dun They all say I'm crazy, don't they?"

I swallowed hard.

"Yes," I said.

"Well," she said, "what do you think? Do seem crazy to you?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know much, do you? We maybe that's good. Maybe you only beliewhat you see. Nothing wrong with that. To only problem with that is, then all you've g is this."

She pointed out the window at the old grivillage houses.

"I've got more," she said.

"What could she have?" I thought myself.

y sister writes to me all the time," she said. "She lives a place where the rich peoplive in golden houses on the shores of the most beautif

sea with water so sweet you can drink it."

By now I knew she was crazy. Or was she "This is a place far across the ocean whe the people don't talk like anyone arour here but where people like us can live lil the szlachta."

I'd heard about how the szlachta lived. Th

big houses, the servants, the wonderful balls and dances. But how could we, tenant farmers, live like that?

She showed me a letter that had been lying on the table.

ook at the stamp. Isn't it lovely?
And look at the postmark. Have you ever heard of such a place?
Chhiiicaaaaagooo. Sheekegu?
How do you even say such a word? How could it be anything but the most marvelous place in the world?"

She had the strangest look on her face when she spoke of these things. Until now she'd had her good eye fixed on me, as if she were ready to grab me and toss me back onto the bench if I tried to get away. But now her mind was elsewhere. And her eyes looked out past the candle in the window, past the other houses, past anything I could imagine.

I couldn't help thinking about what she saw when she looked out the window. The old, grey village couldn't have been that interesting. But a place with houses of gold! She surely must have seen that, if only in her mind.

But then, maybe that's what I liked about Crazy Helena and why, even after she had taken me prisoner in her house, I went back and visited her without being afraid. She was the only one I knew who could imagine a

I miss the summer of Detroit mosquitoes when I was young when Grandmother said, Your life is worth forgetting

I miss
the dirt between my toes, snot
on my upper lip, bee stings
the screaming
arguments of adults
bruises
the rocks and thorns beating up
boys in the alley

The brutality of youth is what I miss, not you never you with your grocery-store flowers that hurt

—J. Paul Los Angeles, California place she had never seen. And if there could be such a place for her, then why not for me, too?

That was in 1909. I remember because Christmas Eve of that year was so cold. The old people in the village said it was the coldest Christmas Eve they had ever known. Come to think of it, it was the coldest I've ever known in my lifetime.

A week earlier, the priest had told us children about charity and how, as Christians, it was our duty to think of those less fortunate than ourselves. I'm not sure if he was thinking of Crazy Helena when he said that. As I recall, he'd never seen her. He had heard all the stories and stayed away from her. But walking home from school that day, I couldn't help thinking about Crazy Helena all alone on Christmas Eve, and such a cold Christmas Eve at that. So, as the other children parted ways and went home, I went to Crazy Helena's house.

When she opened the door and saw me, she had the happiest smile on her face. She asked me in and gave me tea. She told me more about her sister in that strange, golden land of Chicago. It turned out that her sister was a maid for a family who lived in a large house near the lake shore. She lived on the north side, not far from where I live now. It wasn't until years later that I found out that the inland sea that Helena spoke of was Lake Michigan and that the gold houses were actually the Gold Coast mansions where her sister and others from our country worked. But as far as we were concerned, the houses might as well have been made of gold. We had never seen anything like them before and I still have never seen anything more beautiful.

As Helena spoke to me, I noticed that all the meanness she reserved for the others in the village was gone. The look on her face of sad joy at my company seemed all the sweeter because it was so unlike her.

I left after she reminded me that I should have been with my family on Christmas Eve. When I arrived home, the whole family was there. My mother scolded me for being so late. One of my uncles was afraid to speak to me because I had been in league with Crazy Helena. One of my aunts asked me to kiss her rosary because she thought that anyone who could befriend the mad woman must surely be divinely inspired herself.

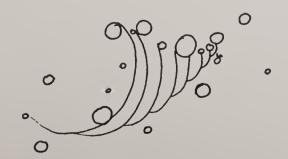
Crazy Helena died a few years later. She

was the first person I ever grieved for. It wasn't until after she'd died that I came to understand that she wasn't crazy. She was just so independent that she could not live with the others, nor they with her. Looking back now, I think she was right to be so independent, in spite of the price she paid in loneliness. She was certainly not like anyone else I had ever met in the village. And that was a good way to be. I decided that if Helena was crazy then so was I.

I came to America some years after that. I didn't find any houses of gold but I found a lot of wonderful things. Where else but America could a farm girl like me go to the university? Who could believe such a thing? And who would have believed that the same girl could become a teacher, of all things? I may not look like Alice in Wonderland now but then it was a different story.

Somehow, I think it's different for that little girl waiting for the bus. She's a wiry little thing, I'll give her that. But she has so little. You can see that just by looking at her. I don't know if there are any Crazy Helenas in Mexico or Guatemala showing young girls what a dream is. Yes, I think it was different for her. True, we were poor, but we survived in the old country. I didn't come over here because I was poor. I came because I wanted to find a new place, a new life. But I don't think she would've survived in her old country, what with the poverty and the wars. I don't know if it was a light at the end of the tunnel that drew her here as it drew me. It was more likely the train behind her that chased her here.

ut still I keep wondering about her. If my legs were still good, I'd go out and ask her, "Is it what you thought it would be? Is it paradise? Did you dream of gold houses, too? Will you find anything here that will make you glad you struggled so hard to get here?"



Paul Holler lives in Chicago, Illinois.



ONE LAST DANCE

by Katie Rich

he water was boiling. She stared at the steam, but felt no urgency to take the kettle off heat. She rubbed her hands together in the mist. She knew that they would nly get more chapped this way, but the nomentary sensation of freedom in her finers was worth it. Anyone would have nughed to see her, hunched over the dissiating heat from a kettle, wearing baggy old weats and furry white slippers that had alled up at the toes, wrapped around the niddle by a heating pad. Anyone would ave laughed, but she just breathed air that new her, yet still kept her cold.

Her mother had told her that it wasn't nornal to be so cold all the time, but by then she as more than used to living with it. Since nen, the cold had become more her than nything she knew, and she had become uite protective of having it taken away rom her. Shuddering so often. Anything she id involved, without question, a strangely ngrossing search for some warmth. She llowed the search to overcome her, and onvinced herself that purpose stood as logic nough. Sometimes she would find herself esiring the comfort of a book. Just sit and ead, and the thought was almost overhelming. But beforehand, she would make cup of tea, and when she sat down, she ould wrap a blanket around every edge of er. There were so many little corners to ick, so much blanket and so little her. Then he would place the book on her lap, face own, and sip at her tea. So much concenation. And heat was so foreign to her that he would wince as it traveled down the ibes of her body and then settle somewhere 1 the middle of her. The heat would huddle gether, fearful of the cold emanating in om all sides of her, always pushing deeper there was really no room for anything ise. Sometimes she wondered whether she ould even produce heat on her own. Do I ven need it? She would touch her icy finger ps to her hot belly where the heat was sitng and wonder which would win. Cold has epth, she thought. Ice holds together. It is npenetrable. It is smoky and dry and quiet nd wide, and I've never seen anything more beautiful than the frozen expanse of lake that hides behind our house in the winter. I don't think I could ever say as much as it does.

She didn't want to be sexy, didn't think it had much of anything to do with her. The last time she wore a dress was two years ago at her father's office Christmas party. It had been red, long, satin. She had gotten her hair and make-up done at a fancy salon where they didn't know her. "Will you do me a favor?" the stylist asked. "Bring me a picture." She smiled hugely. They liked her there. She didn't go back.

At the party, she went into the bathroom and looked in the mirror. She fingered one of the curls at the top of her head. She pressed her lips together and puffed them out sensually. She kept staring in the mirror even when one, then another woman came out of the stalls. It wasn't vanity; it wasn't even her. When she took her hair out after the party, her bathroom counter was eclipsed by all the bobby pins. When she woke up the next morning, there was so much hair spray still in her hair that it puffed out from her head, even when she tried to tame it into a ponytail. Everyone had told her that she looked stunning. She knew they meant it, and that was what frightened her.

Her cat meowed at the screaming kettle and she moved it to another burner. The burner couldn't hold its heat, its fierce color. It had already begun to fade. She watched it change. Where does the heat go? What does it become but something else? She stood as her tea steeped and wondered why her thoughts were always questions.

he mailman was struggling back down the driveway. She hadn't shoveled, but just parked down by the road when she arrived last night. Her parents had left early that afternoon, and all their note said was that they loved her and that she should be sure to water the plants her mother had left in the bathtub. There seemed no reason to shovel, as she would be all alone in the house for the week and she didn't mind leaving the driveway as it was. Watching the mailman, she saw that she had been wrong. There had been a reason after all.

She left her tea and went into the front hall where the mess of mail was strewn on the floor. It bothered her, just leaving it sitting there, but she didn't feel she had the right to read it, or even to look and see what it was. It's not my house any more. She looked up the stairs, then back at the mail. It's not my mail any more.

he bathroom was in clear view at the top of the stairs, and she could see her running clothes hanging on a towel rack by the sink. They were black. Bad for running out here. Hunters around. She wondered why she hadn't thought about that before. But she had a bright red hat and she figured that it would be easy to spot. It's where I don't want to get shot anyhow. Her thoughts were more amusing left as thoughts. She would go in an hour, after her breakfast had settled.

She got a terrible pulsing ache in her sinuses as she walked up the driveway. She closed her eyes, stopped walking, and waited it out. It built, had a climax of pain, and then subsided. She was used to it. It had happened before.

She took one mitten off and wiped the wetness from her eyes. An eyelash was stuck to her ring finger. She could see the root of the lash. It felt good to have it there in her hand, because it could have been one of those lashes that get stuck in your eye all day. And the thought that it's there is torture, even if you can't feel the lash. She didn't want to wish on it, but it was such an old habit. I wish that today turns out to be sunny. There were no clouds. It was easier to wish for something that had promise and a beginning. She blew hard and the eyelash was gone. The wind picked up and she started running, following in the direction of her lash.

She always forgot how hard the first few paces were, how unnatural they felt. They always made her want to turn back. She breathed deeply in, and then felt her own heat begin to kick in. She could produce heat, she realized, but still this was different.

The road was rocky and still had clumps of snow here and there, though they plowed

better up here than they had back in the city. She had to look down every so often in order to navigate a safe path. It would have been easy to trip, but she was careful and it was as easy not to.

She rounded a bend and she was on the ridge. It was simple and rolling, and she smiled thinking how easy running was in such a place. It was just about midday, but there was still color in the landscape. Even the white of the snow seemed paintable. She felt a kind of kinship, even though she had no right. But she felt it, and so it was her reality.

rees started up again, slowly, and then the ridge was gone. The woods had its own light that whispered and subsided. Everything was moving, but she felt almost unmoving in the middle of it. Her motion began to require more consideration. She was fighting against her own immobility, fighting against standing still in this tree congregation. Or maybe it was just the wind. This is a strong wind for the woods, but her speed was unchanged.

But what had changed, really? There had been a noise. It was a noise that didn't drift, as wood air moved, but rather sprung from somewhere or something that was more known to her.

"I can see its head," one of them piped. They were low, crouching, and distracted by each other's attentiveness. He had a clear view, a perfect second shot, but found a dancing beauty in the deer's wounded head. Death, so beautiful, entrancing, is like birth, an opening—the two ends of a darkened tunnel. He was always surprised that death danced, even when he drew it forth to do so. And, as always, it gave him a sense of his own dark and wounded power. And then, as always, and almost within the same deep breath, he realized it was nothing of the sort. Nothing at all.

"He still seems to be following a clear path along the road." George, the other one, was better at tracking. He had gone to college. He had been an engineer major. He could think well in patterns. He never saw any irony in putting his mind to work the hardest out here, before going back on Monday to managing the local grocery store. "It's so ironic to be out of college fifteen, twenty years, and then see where the top of the class ends up," someone at a reunion had once

said to him. "How is it ironic?" There had always been something about institutional expectations that eluded him.

Dave found it strange, and slightly ironic, but in a different sense, of course, that the deer was out on the open road while they trudged through the heavy snow left in the woods. It was, of course, too risky to try and confront him on the road. There is a certain distance obeyed by people on safari when they come across an animal. It is the same for hunters. *Breathing room*, George always said, though Dave wasn't sure for whom. He never asked, because he knew that some questions only disappoint with their answers just as some boundaries are more rewarding simply as boundaries, more rewarding than surpassing them.



nd never look your target in the eyes. That was, of course, the other reason to stay off the road. George had introduced Dave to hunting. He had done it for Gail, his wife, who was getting worried about him spending all that time alone. But he liked teaching: he even liked teaching Dave, who with his white blond hair didn't seem to belong in the woods. Dave was taller than George and he always hunched over to be on eye level with George when he talked. George never told anyone, but it made him feel like Dr. Frankenstein with his strange creation, if the story had been differ-

ent and the doctor had been pleased wi what he made. Kind of like father and so George was pleased when Dave hunch over. You just can't kill something that he trusted you with its secrets, he had to Dave.

"You've lost the shot. Maybe ten more fe and he'll be in range again." Dave follow George's lead. George was short and stock but had been blessed with long arms th could hold aim with a surgeon-like stead ness for more than fifteen minutes. Da could see over George's head, though the wasn't much to look at.

They moved quickly, as quickly as to forty-something men could move in a dee frozen wood. There was something at statoday. Even Dave could sense it.

It had been about twenty minutes. S decided to walk to the top of the next h before turning around.

eorge pushed forward fas and less cautiously than usu He was not happy with Day Never aim at the head. Had he told Dave that their fitime out? It appeared that the shot had or skimmed him. Still, there was no forgivness for a wound to the head, especia when it didn't kill.

This was the last hill before town. To paper mill was pumping out its streamers from smoke as usual. It was hard for her to sere the people in there, working there. Are the sitting down or do they have to stand a day? A fat, swimming, licorice-and-amnnia-smelling snake in the sky. That was she knew of them. That was all she en noticed when she drove through town. So always felt sad, then guilty, when she look if at it. It was their monument.

She took out a tissue and dabbed at her vt nose. She had taken off her right mitten to so. It was squeezed between her right an and her body. It was awkward putting the sue back in her pocket without releasing arm from its clenching position. It was awkward, even for her, and her mit slipped out. It flipped over itself along road at the wind's will. Thumb over hal, thumb over hand. There was a mock gresemblance to an out-of-control car flipp gwheels over roof, wheels over people. Iv sijust in that mitten, but such a thought did't

occur to her so much in words as in her fingers curling up into a ball and then hesitantly touching her face for warmth.

There was a large patch of ice on the way to the mitten. It was black ice, but the sun had a spotlight on it as if for her benefit. Why does a road seem so much larger when you are crossing it? Her steps were measured.

She fell anyway. It didn't seem possible, really, because she knew she had avoided that ice. She fell hard, but anyone watching would have said, no, not fallen, but keeled over, like a novice sailor taking too much wind into his sails. She was a novice of sorts.

e's down." George's voice already sounded calmer. Dave was still catching up; he had fallen behind. He had big feet that kept getting stuck in the

"Damn it," he threw a punch at a nearby tree as his right foot got caught on a buried

"Let's check it out." Dave had finally caught up to George. They started out onto the road. Of course, breathing room did not apply any more when something was dead, or dying.

She lay still, waiting. Not for someone, but for the warmth that had started flowing to subside. It had paralyzed her, this warmth. It had no origin and yet it was coming from somewhere. She had a memory of touching bath water that her mother had prepared. Recoiling, she was recoiling, and then confused. She couldn't tell; which was it, freezing or burning? She lay there, intense. Could she be mixing up the signals? Is it possible I still haven't learned which is which?

She put her hands to her forehead. Then she put a hand on her wrist to take her pulse. She looked down and placed her arms by her side. *No, wait!* She could not recoil.

"There's a pulse, but it's faint." Dave seemed to be thinking straight. George kept his hands around her head, couldn't move and didn't feel it appropriate to touch anything else. He looked at her face, tried to see if she was scared. He would reassure her. He would tell her that they weren't going to leave her. But from upside down, the face didn't look like a face. Her features kept getting mixed up in his mind as he concentrated on picturing her the right way. The mouth



Photos circa 1927

and the eyes. That's what makes up an expression. He couldn't separate them from everything else. He couldn't make out a normal face. He was beginning to panic.

"Jesus, George! I said I need you over here to hold something over the bleeding while I go for help."

George hesitated. It seemed like what he was doing was so important. I have to keep her head up, to let her focus on something that she will recognize. Dave grabbed at his jacket and George eased her head back onto the road.

"Use this." Dave shoved a large black mitten into George's hands.

"But it's freezing." Dave was already down the road, running, his big feet kicking up splashes of dirt and salt.

he glass was thick and the lights were the kind that flickered, but Dave still didn't dare look up at the window on her door. Her parents were inside. They had flown back from Bermuda. When they appeared last night in the hallway, the ocean sun had not completely worn off and they were still sweating. It wasn't a nervous kind of sweat that soaks your shirt and pales your face. It was beady and watery and light, and Dave had put his head down because it made them look so sun-kissed.

Gail sat down next to Dave.

"How are you doing?" Dave didn't think it was a question whose answer mattered. He shrugged which only made a worse answer.

"She's going to live." Gail was moving slowly with her words. "You know that, don't you?" She felt responsible for Dave.

Dave knew she would live. Dave also knew that they had put her in all kinds of braces before they loaded her onto the stretcher. Don't move her! The head paramedic had warily stifled a yell, which he tried to hide some more with big hand motions.

Dave thought about all kinds of dancing, ballroom dancing, ballet dancing, hip-hop dancing. Then he thought about the kind of dancing that he and his wife and George and Gail did on New Year's. Let-loose dancing, silly dancing, releasing dancing. Whatever it was that they did never really felt like dancing, but now he realized it must have a pattern of its own. Even his dancing, a pattern.

Then Dave thought about death and dancing. He closed his eyes and pictured the first deer he had seen as it died. It didn't seem as romantic as it once had. Or as foreign. And then he couldn't rewind his mind, and he was stuck with the last picture—the hot body melting its place in the snow. And the long, graceful ears that were now flattened next to its head. No blood, not like the girl. It had fallen on its wound, as if to hide it, as if to lay down and die and really mean it.

ave knew he would be spending a lot of time in this hospital. That's why he had dragged the cushiony chair from the lounge to an out-of-the-way spot across from her room last night. It was sweltering hot in the hall, and Dave pulled off his sweat shirt and stuffed it behind his head. He was confused by this sort of heat in a hospital. Doesn't heat spread germs? But he let the thought go. He closed his eyes. He decided that even he should have some time to rest.

Katie Rich lives in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Freeze Framed

I'm in suspended animation it's a state you see "old maid" so harsh "rut" so plain but this is a scientific condition a circumstance just floating frozen freeze framed a cryogenic wonder a still life.

My friends have married have born babies have begun businesses have boarded boats to sail around the world but I never change or dream or risk just floating frozen freeze framed a cryogenic wonder a still LIFE.

We need certainty don't you
think
the lighthouse, the tide, the sun, the moon
not change in a blink
but
a link with the known the
sure the
dependable.
I'm it Ms.
Suspended Animation
just floating
frozen
freeze framed
a cryogenic wonder
but ALIVE
awaiting a cure!

—Deborah A. Reynolds Terre Haute, Indiana



caught

What was she to say now? The evening dishes done she slowly folded the cloth and hung it on its rack near the sink

The girl-child stood in the doorway, red Keds on her stockingless feet, panties peeking from under the tops of her pajamas, one arm akimbo, the other holding the book she had chosen for her bedtime story

The woman's mind recalled when the book was recommended to ease the explanation of adoption. The young mother had given the child's name to the main character making the book the child's favorite; she had neglected to alter the book

Two years it had been relegated to the dead book shelf the child could read now and had chosen THIS book THIS night. Glancing through the pages, she discerned the truth, and so, here she was fiery-eyed demanding loudly—

"HEY! WHO'S THIS KID, PETER, ANYWAY?"

—Barbara Drakis Merrillville, Indiana

Gardener

Beginnings in Brooklyn, care in Connecticut, tenderness while Tennesseans took the young plant. Further ripening in Rochester causing the Flushing seedling to strengthen. Though, once mature, none who'd fertilized the soil had seen its blossoms.

—Lois Greene Stone Pittsford, New York

Bonsai

Bent but unbroken branches bandaged in wire zigzag like black lightning along blossoming lines of fire.

Dew collects like sweat on the glazed clay pot that rests at the rim of a cool blue pool bloodied by starving carp swimming under a serene Buddha.

After raking the pebble garden in long wavy lines a monk soaks moss on the south side of the gnarled 67-year-old trunk soothing its wounds.

This belittled potted & lopped juniper is not bitter.
Though shears snap open and shut like a clear-cut case of murder, it is attuned to its twigs tortured & amputated a hundred times.

Believing it will ultimately outlive the tree surgeon's awful dwarfing saws this disciplined midget still sings.

—Arthur Gottlieb Lake Oswego, Oregon

The Stranger

You walk on endless streets
Where everyone is self-absorbed,
Mindless of your presence; eyes
May meet, but they are uncoupled,
Vacant. You may see someone and
Wish to say hello, but he just
Whooshes away like a ghost.

Carrying your roots and a bag of worries,
You slowly drift into an alleyway where
You hope the steps behind you are Taps of an alley cat.

—Mahdy Y. Khaiyat Goleta, California

Like Children

My hands and cheeks stung from the March wind and the yellow light beckoned

through the skeleton oaks, yet I could not bring her in and end my child's game.

The wild bobbing and swooning of my crimson kite to currents I could not know

made me understand that my creation, once in flight, was no longer mine.

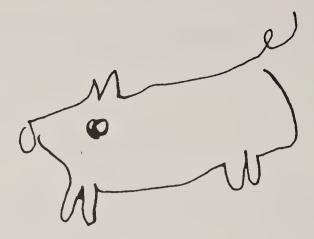
—Emily Florence Baldwin, New York



The Insomniac's Dream

Through a hole in the paneled wall, I see my father leaning against the joists. His eyes are closed and his face is cast in an odd pallor. Dark rings encircle his eyes as if this was a much dreamed-of sleep. What could be contained behind those fluttering eyes? Thoughts of an unfortunate marriage? Or is it my equally as unfortunate birth? It is incalculable this misfortune, absolute.

—Alan Catlin Schenectady, New York



IN A PIG'S EYE

by Janet Moran

ne of the first things you see about a pig is that big pink snout. Fascinating how it twitches about, sniffing and snorting almost simultaneously.

But did you ever notice that hogs hardly ever look you in the eye? They practically avoid your stare. Their eyes are set low and far back on their head and spaced so far apart, it makes you wonder if each eye sees the same thing. Hogs don't have much of a neck either, so it is difficult for them to flip their heads up to match your gaze.

To look at a pig, eye to eye, you are reduced to getting down on all fours. And even then, right down there at ground level, mucking around in some old mud hole and staring at that pig nose to nose, you may not have his whole-hearted, undivided attention. Chances are that pig will be otherwise occupied, grunting and rooting around in the dirt for something to eat or else looking for a comfortable spot to sink down into the cool, oozing mud.

I know a lot about pigs. Pigs are piglets when they are young and hogs when they become adults. We had a lot of both as I grew up out in the country on the tail end of the Great Depression.

Pigs and hogs will eat about anything. You don't have to always feed them corn and alfalfa. They are just as happy with shorts and middlins'—otherwise known as slop.

Pigs fatten up quickly for butchering. A good-sized hog will furnish a family of four—even one with a teenage son who owns an appetite the size of a barn—with enough hams, sausage, bacon and pork chops to last the winter. Sometimes, as

spring approaches and hams are still hanging in the smoke house, there's enough to pass on to the neighbors. That's important when people hardly have money to put anything else on the table.

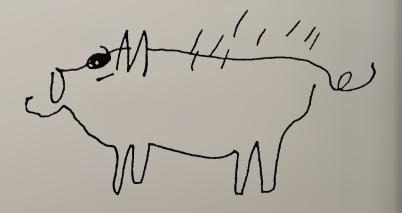
Anyone who grew up on a farm knows another custom. Never allow livestock to become pets. But the rules changed for me the summer of '42. My favorite cat, Hamburger, had disappeared into the corn fields and I missed him something fierce. My brother, Gene, had his dog, Bruce, to play with. Except old Bruce was just too lazy to get up from the middle of the road and out of the way when the volunteers' fire truck came clanging down on him and had to swerve to keep from running over his hind quarters. For sure, that dog wasn't much fun.

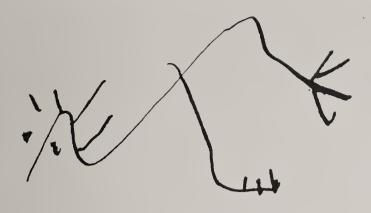
My mother had her chickens to fuss over and Dad tended to the cows and goats. No one, it seemed, claimed the pigs.

Of all the animals on a farm, pigs are the least understood. Those short-legged bodies with thick, bristly hides that end in dumb but cute curlycue tails are not the most endearing objects of affection. That is, unless you happen to own a little piglet named Oink.

I took a shine to Oink early on. There's hardly any little piglet that wouldn't win you over. They are simply little bitty versions of grown-up hogs and sows. Piglets are as fresh and pink as any newborn baby. Skittering around the barn lot, they run on short, little stump legs, bobbing up and down, making the sweetest squeals.

Oink and five others came from our best and biggest sow. They were born in early spring when there was just the faintest trace of green on barren, black tree branches. Winter snows had disappeared, the earth was beginning to warm and the sweep of lawn in front of our farmhouse lay in anticipation of that first ground-soaking rain which overnight can change brown, brittle spindles into tender, green blades.





Straight spears of daffodil stems were rapidly pushing up their chartreuse yellow heads to replace the lavender crocus that had already bloomed and faded away. The cold, stiff March winds, still blustering in from the northwest, occasionally settled down to a gentle and soft warm breeze.

This time of rebirth was even more noticeable behind our wood-burning kitchen stove. There, in low cardboard boxes, snuggled downy, chirping baby chicks. I was undecided about what to do first after school. Should I sit cross legged on the kitchen floor, picking up fuzzy, yellow bodies and then letting them run about on spindly, orange legs, or should I go outside and hang on the barnyard fence to watch Oink and his little brothers and sisters?

For the time being, I could venture no closer to the piglets because a sow protecting her young can be a mean mamma. So I stayed on the fence and called, "Here, sooy sooy" to entice the piglets to come near me. I was more than pleased when they trotted over to sniff and snort around my toes and then just as quickly scamper off.

Like most other farmers, my Dad sold some of his spring piglets and kept others to either raise as sows or as hogs to butcher.

Oink was one of those he kept. Small wonder! Oink was the best piglet in the lot. I wasn't sure if Oink was a he or a she and frankly never gave it much thought. I just liked Oink's white hide with black spots. All the other piglets were black.

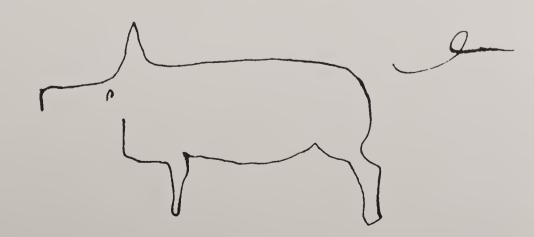
As spring gave way to summer and the baby chicks grew into chickens, and my mother placed them in the hen house with the rest of the brood, I spent more and more time with Oink. I had to keep Oink's name a secret. I feared my father would disapprove if he thought I had named a pig. That was a giant step closer to having a pig for a pet. So

I just stood at the fence and called out, "Oink! Oink! Oink!" For all my Dad knew, I was just imitating the pigs.

It was a toss-up between my brother and me as to who was going to do two dreaded chores—feed the pigs or weed the beans. I hated the bean patch. The green, sticky leaves scratched my bare legs and itched. And the pig lot on a hot morning had a sickly stench. But that summer, I gladly tried to be the first down to the barn to shell out corn for the pigs.

Oink learned to come when I stepped into the pig lot and called out. Oink liked to have the back of his ears scratched. Now that Oink was weaned from his mother, she wasn't so protective and I could play with Oink without harm. If my brother was hoeing the beans and out of eyesight, Oink and I would go out to the cow pasture to run about. I enticed Oink into these running games with green apple treats. I knew if Dad found out, he'd be unhappy. Oink was turning into one fat pig, and,running about, he was exercising pounds off his by now full-grown, round body.

And so summer passed and the hot, sticky days of July and August gave way to the crisp, cool mornings of September. Now, when my father and Uncle Clint got together, the subject of butchering entered their conversation. Two of my father's five brothers lived in the country. All of them butchered pigs for their family's meat. It was a family event with the brothers who lived in town arriving to donate their labor in return for a portion of the meat. They collectively owned one set of butchering tools and there was always much discussion as to who had the tools last and who was going to do what when slaughtering time came.



Pigs L-R: Louise Russell, 1914; Elizabeth Craig, 1907; Molly Ferrante, 1914; H.W. Pease, 1906.

sually, butchering day took place at Uncle Clint's. I was just as happy with this arrangement, but sometimes I was slightly disappointed. The sight and smell of blood and raw meat turned my stomach. But when our house was designated for butchering day, I liked the excitement of the early morning preparations, the before-dawn smell of coffee in the kitchen and the arrival of Uncle Clint, who seldom came to our house. Sometimes he brought my cousin Phyllis.

I liked the large, noontime dinner my mother prepared, especially when Phyllis and I came in from the snapping cold with the men and actually sat down at table instead of serving the meal.

But most of all I liked stirring the chitlins. That job was given to the youngest, most able child of the home where butchering took place. Chitlin stirring came at the end of the day. All the hard work was completed, and as my uncles cleaned up the site, they would cut the pig's hide into small pieces and throw it into the large wrought-iron cauldron hanging from a tripod over a crackling, open campfire. Constant stirring to keep the chitlins from sticking to the bottom in the hot water caused young arms to grow numb and weary, until it was time to scoop the crisp, brown morsels out to cool on sheets of brown paper.

My mother ground the pork scraps for sausage. My father had direct say as to the seasonings used. He loved the taste of sage mixed with a touch of cayenne. Winter mornings, when you could smell the sausage frying in a wrought-iron skillet, my father claimed he knew just by the scent—before he even tasted the sausage—whether he had the right combination of seasonings.

I didn't care for the spicy sausage, but I liked to hear my father rave about how good it tasted and I enjoyed helping my mother grind it up. She bolted the meat grinder to the kitchen table, and I turned the handle. At first the meat came out in little, squiggly rivulets, perfect for mixing together. That done, the grinder tool was changed. The ground meat was put back through the grinder and came out in one long, continuous ribbon of meat to be stuffed into the pig intestines. Earlier, my mother had washed and boiled the guts for sanitary reasons.

As the sausage making took place, an enormous kettle of water sat boiling on the back

of our wood-burning stove. Into this was placed the hog's head, the meat to be later taken off the skull and ground into scrapple, my father's favorite. It's been said that when you butcher a pig, you use every part except the squeal.

The year I became friends with Oink was the winter I remember as the time when butchering took place at our house. The decision was made in late August as my father and Uncle Clint, who always reminded me of Abe Lincoln, stood in casual conversation at the barn yard fence, their sunburned, bare arms resting on the hot, white clapboard. I overheard their conversation, and it caused a slight stir in my conscience for having chosen a pig for a pet. That small pang was followed by an overwhelming strike of terror. A pig would be slaughtered at our house.

The rest of the summer and early fall was spent in a subtle but unrelenting campaign to save Oink. When I fed the pigs, I tried to give more to the others. But Oink was like greased lightning as he quickly devoured his meager share and then moved in on the others. It almost seemed he was determined to be the fattest pig without realizing the horrible consequences.

Nevertheless, as we stood at the barn gate, I spoke to my father about how fat the other pigs were getting and what a runt that Oink was. My father only looked at me quizzically. I then spoke about what a fine-looking pig Oink was and how we would be better off saving Oink for breeding. My father just quietly shook his head.

Eventually we were well into September, and I acquiesced to better judgment, telling my father that Oink was my pet, sort of—that I had spent the summer getting to know Oink and had trained Oink to do tricks, sort of—and couldn't he just "sorta choose" another pig for butchering? My father just looked at me over the top of his eye glasses. I thought I detected a softening in his glance.

armhouses in cold weather generally have two warm rooms—the kitchen and the parlor. Bedrooms are cold, causing sleepers to snuggle deep beneath a heavy layer of quilts. Having spent a restless night, the early, cold dawn of butchering day found me sleeping soundly. Through the fog of wakefulness, the quiet voices in the kitchen were just a murmur. The smell of strong black coffee and fresh baked cinna-

mon rolls did not penetrate the covers over my head.

But over the quiet, soft winter landscape, the crack of a rifle came through loud and clear. I awoke with a jump start, threw back the covers and bolted out of the house in flannel pajamas and bare feet.

Uncle Clint held the rifle in the crook of his arm. My father stood off at a distance. They remained quiet and motionless as I approached, their gaze riveted toward the ground where Oink lay, his red blood spilling out on the white snow.

Somehow his black and white spotted body looked larger in death than it ever had in life. I realized that he was no longer a little piglet named Oink, but a full-grown hog bigger than most I had ever seen. He lay stone still, beyond ever coming again when I called his name. I remained quiet too, suddenly feeling the cold ground on my bare feet.

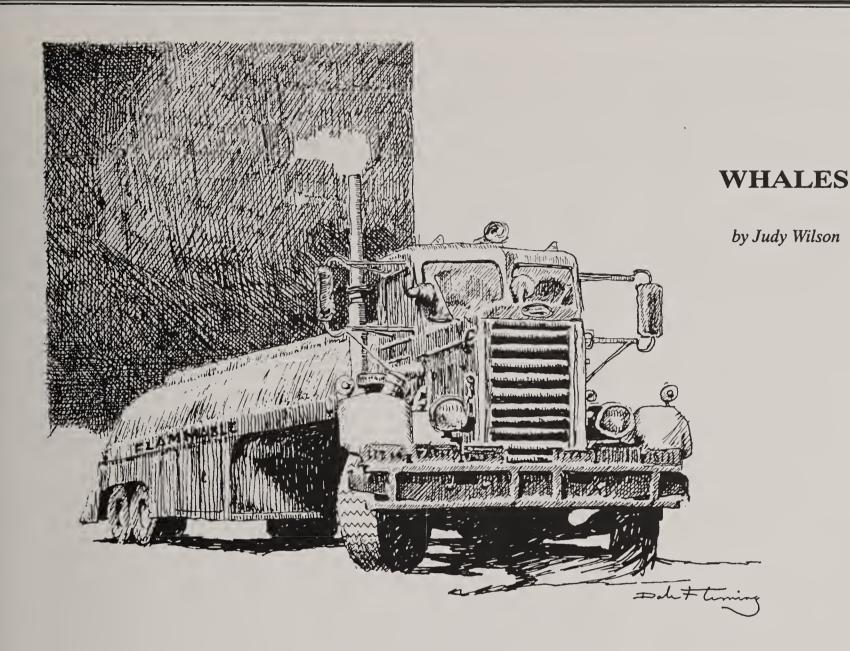
Saying not a word, I turned to run back to the house. My father scooped this gangly seven-year-old up in his arms and together, with my tearful face buried on his shoulder, we made our way back indoors. He gently put me back in bed, rubbed my cold feet and tucked the covers up tight around my chin.

My presence for butchering day was not expected or even requested. I remained in the house for the whole day. My cousin Phyllis got to stir the chitlins.

When it was over and everyone had gone home, I got to thinking that my father had undoubtedly let my Uncle Clint choose the pig for butchering. And I could not imagine, as Uncle Clint raised his rifle and trained the sights on the fattest pig in the lot, that my father would step forward and yell, "Hold off, that's Janet Sue's favorite pet pig!" My Uncle Clint would have said something like, "Gene, for Christ's sake, this is the biggest and best pig and we're wasting time butchering if we don't use the biggest hog." And my father could not have argued against his daughter breaking the unwritten and unspoken rule of not adopting livestock as pets.

The hams hung in the smokehouse. Sausage and pork chops were served at just about every meal. I ate a lot of potatoes that winter and, for all purposes, became a vegetarian, except on Sundays when my mother put fried chicken on the table.

Janet Moran lives in Hammond, Indiana.



ou work at an old folks home for fifteen years and you start feeling as old as your patients. You shave old soft faces with electric razors, the droopy skin turning ink, eyes watering and always staring at the iling. There's tomato soup to spoon into ices that jerk uncontrollably from disease. heets to change—always sheets to change. ld sick people smell bad. You bathe their ood-bruised bodies, sprinkle powder, tuck em in crisp, white sheets, and five minutes ter they smell again. Same with old dogs. verywhere you go there are teeth soaking cups. You open curtains. You smile and lk the sunny talk. You pack up one's clongings—worn-out gowns, teeth, brush, d, cheap, dime-store jewelry, hairpins. You ing in the new patient, unpack the fresh owns, new slippers, big, white, granny

Iderwear.

Fifteen years ago I felt something for these cople. I was good at my job. They were all y friends and we'd have long conversants. Now, I don't know, it's like I'm plastable. My smiles, my talk, all that sunny talk, alf the time I can't remember their names. Today, I've been here only thirty minutes. m a zombie, I gotta get out of here, just for

a day. I've got sick days coming—they've accumulated over the months. I'm never sick. I tell the head RN I'm not feeling well, I think I've got a stomach bug. I punch my time card in the slot. How many time cards have I gone through? I wonder.

I walk slow to my car. It's still really early, sun's just now coming up good, and I'm thinking about what I'm going to do. Driving to my apartment, the man on the radio talks about the gray whales off the coast, they're making their pass. I listen to him ramble on about the whales—he's aiming for the tourists, I know—how the whales only make two runs by the Oregon coast a year, once between December and January, when they move south, down from the Arctic waters off Alaska to the birthing grounds in the warm waters around Baja. Then, sometime around the first of spring, they'd head back north. The northerly migration is the most exciting, he says, because the mothers are returning with their calves and the pops are proud and aggressive, more likely to pitch and roll. He mentions four or five different locations—good viewing areas. One happens to be Yaquina Head, not an hour's drive from my apartment. That's it, I'll ride up there and spend the day. I've lived here all my life and never seen the whales. I'll go to the apartment, change, grab the camera. The old folks will love the pictures.

The sun is dead in my eyes now. So what does that make it, east? West? Shouldn't I know these things? Once again, I've left my sunglasses at home. I'm following the little red Miata in front of me, can't see anything, my eyes are squinched into narrow slits. I'm pushing up in the car, trying to get into a position high enough for the sun visor to shield off some of these blinding rays, the Miata hits the brakes, I hit my brakes, I hear the brakes on the car behind me squealing, and I pull my shoulders up and duck my head, waiting for impact. Nothing. Traffic moves again. I've got a left turn coming up but the Miata goes straight. I'm the first one in the turn lane. Not good. I can't see the damn traffic light. I mean, I can see it, the fact that it's there, but I can't see what color the lights are. I put my hand up, trying to block the glare. No luck. The sun is directly behind the signal light and all I see when I look at it is a dark oblong object in the middle of white light. This is incredible, I'm thinking, how the hell am I suppose to know when the damn light changes. I'm really nervous now. A horn blows behind me. I strain my eyes looking for the little green arrow. White. It's all white! A horn blows again, this time in a long blast. Fuck it—I hit the gas and take the intersection with little control over what I'm doing. I'm hoping there's nothing in the way, no pedestrians trying to cross the street on the other side. Then I'm out of it—all the glare—and driving through the soothing shade provided by the two-story buildings along the street. I settle back into my seat.

I have to make another right turn which will put me dead into the sun again, but this time I think it'll be OK because there's a garbage truck in front of me and it's turning, too. I've been watching this guy hanging onto the back of that truck. What a job, I think, but look at this guy. He's pretty special, one of those people that makes life interesting. He's really going with the flow, moving like he's part of that truck, like he's following the lead of a dance partner. He's maybe twenty-five, tall, slim but not too. He's wearing this black leather duster that's flapping in the wind and when the truck takes the turns he leans out diagonally, into the curve. His knees bend in with the dips in the road and he pulls himself upright again with a suggestive move of his hips. He's on stage. He signals with a black-gloved hand to the driver and the truck slows, edging close to the curb. Swinging out and down, like a hawk diving, he swoops up a bag of garbage, and with no awkward movements, he swings it into the truck.

e get to a four-way stop and I notice the garbage-truck man has headphones on. Two thin wires trail off inside his leather duster. The truck moves through the four way, and with my eyes fixed on it, I pause briefly at the stop and then continue. I hear a horn. Something tells me to hit the brakes. I hear brakes, not mine, and see a car sliding toward me. We both stop with our bumpers almost touching, maybe a two-inch gap in between. It dawns on me that it hadn't been my turn. I throw the car in reverse, back up just a little, the driver behind me blowing the horn, paranoid, I guess, that I'm going to back into him. The car that almost hit me pulls off slowly. I give an apologetic smile and mouth the words, "I'm sorry" as it starts by, but when it's directly in front of me, I see a young girl looking straight at me, angry,

and shooting me the bird with all her might. So now I feel damned stupid for mouthing, "I'm sorry." The sun is in my eyes again. I look both ways and continue through the intersection, but the garbage truck is gone.

t the apartment, I turn on the

stereo and change, grab two drinks and put them in the mini cooler, dig the camera out of the closet and realize the batteries are probably no good. I haven't used it in the last year, or two, hell, maybe three. No sweat—they make those little disposable cameras now, little cardboard things with film already in it, set to go. I'll have to stop by the drugstore and get one of those. No problem there, it's next to the gas station and I've got to stop for gas anyway. Hell, I'll have to stop by the bank and get some cash, too. I might want to go by a fast food joint, or stop and get another drink, or who knows. You just can't go off without cash. I flop down on the couch. Shit, it's too much like work. Why the hell bother? It's like running chores for the old folks, just a quick stop here and a quick stop there and before you know it the whole damn day is gone. I looked around the apartment at my frumpy, plaid furniture, the square, wooded coffee table, the bland beige drapes hanging over the patio doors. I'm going. Yes. I grab my cooler, head out to the car, feeling good in my jeans. I hate that white uniform.

After I gas up, I pull up to the drugstore and there's only one parking place left in the front. There's an old white Mustang parked on the left of it, only he's parked right on the line. There's a blue Toyota parked on the right and I have to think for a minute—is there enough room. Yeah, sure. I pull the Civic into the tight spot, congratulate myself that I didn't hit anything.

I smell sausage cooking when I go in and decide to have a sausage biscuit—no—don't want to eat it here. I want to take it with me. I get a fountain drink to go along with it. I like these old drugstores that still have lunch counters. With my sausage biscuit, fountain drink and cardboard camera, I have to juggle around a bit to open the door. When I get outside, I see something on my windshield. I think it's a parking ticket and I'm wondering what I did wrong. I put the drink down on top of the car, snatch the piece of paper out from under the windshield wiper. "Why don't you park a little closer to somebody

next time, Asshole!" Well, I thought, at leas they signed their name.

Waiting in line at the bank's drive through I watch a miniature collie stepping all ove its owner in the driver's seat. The dog has it front feet hanging out the rolled-down win dow. The driver reaches out, gets an enve lope out of the window tray, and sits there for another minute. I know what she's doing She's trying to get the dog biscuit out of the envelope to give to the dog. It's weird. The don't have suckers for children any more Just dog biscuits. Same at the service station I just left. Oregon must be one of the only states left that gives full service at the ga stations. And they give dog biscuits, too. The attendants keep them in the pockets of their little brown jackets.

I cash my check at the drive through and head out to Highway 101. As usual it' bumper to bumper tourists. It's a beautiful drive up the coastline with a lot of scenilookout points where you can pull off and take in the view. There is an eighteen-wheel er behind me. Nothing but chrome bumpe in my rear-view mirror. I hate a truck that tailgates. Really pisses me off. Especiall with all this stop-and-go traffic. I try to con centrate on the car in front of me, a ta Saturn with a Utah license plate. The drive obviously is not use to driving the stee curves and he's overcompensating with hi brakes. Two little blond ponytails wer swishing back and forth sitting close on th back seat. Twins, I think. They're cute, bu I'll bet they're a handful for poor Mor there. I'd never wanted kids, which is goo because at the age of thirty-eight, I'm gettin a little old to have any. I grew up in a bi family, had five brothers and one sister, a younger than me. I did my share of mother ing. Got a good taste of it and don't want t do it again. I don't have anything agains kids, as long as I don't have to take care of them.

he two girls turn around in the back seat of the Saturn. They are twins, I can see now. I smile at them and wave my fingers from the steering wheel. They wave back with hands cupped tight, just moving their fingers back and forth. I wave again and the girls look at each other, full throtton the giggles. When they look back, one of them sticks her tongue out at me, which she follows with a smile. I stick my tongue of

nd smile, too. I make a series of faces at hem, all that I can remember from childlood, and then, heck with it, I make up some new ones. They're getting really boisterous low, on the verge of getting in trouble, ecause Mom there just turned around and gave them the evil eye. I don't care if you do et in trouble, I say out loud. I'm not going o stop until you do. I let go of the wheel for second and make the turned-up pig nose nd they go nuts, bouncing up and down on heir knees in the back seat. Now, the father, vho is trying to negotiate the curves with ne foot on the brake, turns his head as far as te can towards them, points a finger over the ront seat, and the girls turn around, sitting o only their pony tails show. I see the shouller harnesses of the seat belts being pulled oward them them and I know they're fumling with buckling themselves in, as nstructed no doubt.

he truck is not backing off. I tap the brakes a few times. His bumper keeps showing up in the rear-view mirror, and when I look out the side mirror all I can ee are his massive tires. A bowling ball folowing a grape.

"That's it," I say. "That truck has got to o."

I pull off the road at the next scenic lookut. The truck goes around and I have to vait for traffic before I can get back out on ne highway. "Damn." After four or five ninutes, I finally see an opening coming up. low, if that little black car there will hurry p, I can just make it. Yes!

I see a sign that says, "Yaquina Head 5 niles." The traffic is getting slower and lower and now, for some reason, we aren't oing anywhere. Just stopped. I'm thinking, lod, now what? I wait and wait and wait nd wish I was at home. I turn the radio on nd there's a song on that makes me think bout Glen. Glen and I were engaged, but e broke it off a good six months ago. Or, I hould say, he broke it off. He fell in love rith someone else. He didn't say that, of ourse. Just said he wasn't ready for a comnitment. The man was forty-two years old. le was in love with someone else. I wasn't ally broke up about it. When he left my partment that night, I just said, "Well, ick," crawled in the bed and went to sleep. d been married before. When I was twen-'-four I married a guy who had his own avel agency. That was fun for about a year. I wonder about me. I don't miss guys, or dating. Maybe I'd miss it if I didn't feel so tired all the time. I see good-looking men and I look at them, sometimes I think what it would be like to be with them. But I don't feel like going through all that bullshit of getting to know them. I think the only thing I miss is being in love. That was a nice feeling. No, hell, it wasn't. It took a lot of energy to be in love. Now, I see young people loving it up in public, fresh in love, and I say, "OK, for them." It's stupid, kind of, being in love. It makes you act stupid.

Traffic is moving again, barely. I start the car and inch along with the procession. We go maybe a mile and now I see what the hold up was—a tractor trailer on its side, blocking the entire highway. State troopers are directing us through a scenic lookout on the opposite side of the road when I spot it, the wrecked car, off to my right—the tan Saturn, the Utah license plate crushed even with the pavement. It's one of those moments when your senses become extremely acute, and you hear your heart beating and every inch of your skin tingles. I get only a quick look at the car, at that license plate. It's still sitting on the right side of the yellow line, crushed like the cars in monster truck shows. I look quickly at the truck laying on its side as I drive by, the trooper jerking his hand harder as if to tell me to hurry up. It's the same truck. I look one last time off to my right, but I can't see the car any more.

"Damn." I'm confused about what I'm suppose to feel now. It was a surprise, a shock. I turn the radio off and try to comprehend the thing—whole family there one minute, girls bouncing around in the back seat—gone the next, and everybody worried about getting where they're going, driving by, looking, a minute later they're thinking about something else. I'm thinking, it ought to matter. But it doesn't—and that's the confusion of it.

eeze, give me a break, I only wanted to take a day off, for Christ's sake. The turn off for Yaquina Head is up on the left. Everybody seems to be turning in there. Oh, great, it'll be packed. If it's packed, I'm going home. I follow the traffic down to the main parking area, but I know it's going to be full because there are cars parked on both sides of the road for a good mile. I circle the parking lot one time, look up at the Head and see a thick, layered wall

of people standing from one end of the lookout to the other and stretched all down along the beach.

"Well, that's it. I'm not parking a mile away and fighting this crowd to see a damn whale."

The whole day was a waste. I think about tomorrow, going back to work. For some reason, the garbage truck man comes to mind. But I think: Yeah, give him fifteen years on the back of that truck and he won't be dancing to work either. I watch soaps for the rest of the day. I'm not into soaps. I just like to see what the pretty people are wearing these days and how they fix their hair. Then the talks come on. Some poor man is on the Maury Povich show in tears because he accidently shot and killed his daughter.

I stick a Weight Watchers meal in the oven and take a shower. I stay in the shower until the water runs cold—my little gift to myself—the way I pamper myself. Growing up with so many brothers and sisters, we always had to use the hot water sparingly.

I eat in front of the TV, watching the local news. I like eating when I'm alone. I can forget about my manners and just dig right in. I don't have to close my mouth and if I feel like burping, I can just let it go, and I can gulp my milk, and wipe my finger tips on my jeans if I want to. I stop chewing the lasagna—there's a shot of the gray whales on the TV. I turn the TV up and wonder where the hell they're shooting the shot from because there's not a soul around. The whales are beautiful and there are lots of them and they pitched and rolled for the camera. At the end of the clip, two little white words showed at the bottom of the screen, "Siltcoos Beach." Damn. I'd driven right by there on the way to Yaquina Head. I watch the rest of the news, turn the TV off, and look around the apartment. It's only six o'clock, but I'm going to bed. I stretch as I get up from the couch, and remember the wreck. It hadn't been on the news. No family from Utah was killed today just miles outside of Yaquina Head. Nope. Maybe I should get a cat, I think, and turn the lights out.

Judy Wilson lives in Petal, Mississippi.

ANNIVERSARIES

Gordon Stamper Editor



MESSAGE FROM ETHEL RAE

by Judi A. Rypma

hey call it a senior-care facility," Henry VanPorfliet corrects his daughter as their tire treads crunch along the snow-covered driveway winding between rows of white pines. But Anna Marie, confronted vith a sombre brick building encircled by a even-foot, black iron fence, is not coninced.

"Mom called it an asylum. She said grandna has completely lost touch with reality."

"Not completely," her father assures her, and your mother tends to exaggerate someimes, as you should know by now. Your grandmother does have her lucid moments, is the doctor calls them." He reaches over ind awkwardly pats her on the shoulder. Honey, you have to understand that we did-I't have a choice. I hate it more than you do, eeing my own mother like this, but she ouldn't be trusted alone any more."

"We could have taken turns looking in on er," she protests.

"No one has that much time. You, of all people, should know that." He turns off the gnition and looks at her, and for the first ime Anna Marie notices her father's hair ind eyebrows have completed their blacko-white evolution. Funny, she thinks getting out of the car, that I never really noticed him iging until now.

For too long she has been swept along in he world of her own problems. Even her iusband's long-awaited government check, vhich arrived without any back pay, did not prove to be a panacea. "I don't know who gave you the idea that social security disbility payments were retroactive," someone named Mrs. Satterine explained impatiently vhen Anna Marie called. "The 'effective late' refers to the date your husband first iled—actually, the first of the month after he one in which he received his last pay check. You never receive benefits for that irst six-month period." She regretted the nisunderstanding, of course, was sorry to earn that the Selimes had borrowed money igainst the anticipated lump sum, but no, here was really nothing she or anyone else ould do.

Two weeks later, Social Services stopped

weekly payments because the Selimes were no longer deemed "in need." They received the same response from the Veterans Administration, which ruled Michael's sudden blindness "non-service connected" and their new social security income "too high" to qualify them for any kind of pension.

But with some financial relief, Anna Marie has hardly noticed the long winter days dissolving into one another. Classes, her restaurant job, and Michael's regular visits to the psychiatrist, which he discontinued last week when he pronounced himself cured and no longer suicidal, have kept her too busy to make it out to the VanPortfliet farm. And now grandmother has been taken from the old homestead she loved and relegated to this sterile, cramped place. Her parents, assuming Anna Marie had enough problems of her own, never consulted her until after the fact.

er resentment toward her father, however, softens as she walks up the stone staircase of the main entrance beside him. The Henry VanPortfliet who raised her would never have consented to such a thing if he didn't feel it necessary. Her mother, however, pleaded a headache today instead of visiting her mother-in-law, promising instead to pray for Ethel Rae.

An attendant ushers them to Grandmother's room, which resembles an even smaller version of the dormitory room Anna Marie lived in when she met Michael: barren white walls, high rectangular windows overlooking another wing, narrow bed, sink, toilet, two straight visitors' chairs, a dusty rose armchair, and a standard issue desk.

Ethel Rae VanPorfliet sits alone in the armchair, her back to the door, and does not turn around when they first greet her. "How are you, Grandma?" Anna Marie rests one mittened hand on the thin shoulder. Her grandmother has lost weight, giving her an almost skeletal appearance. A stiff wind, Anna Marie thinks, would pick up the old woman and blow her away like one of her birds' nests torn this winter from their branch cradles to drift helplessly across the frozen fields.

"Mom?" Henry says tentatively, pulling up a chair across from her. "How are you feeling?" When Ethel Rae does not reply, he fills the gap with conversation about former neighbors, the efficiency of the staff here, and the lowered price of gasoline since the Gulf War ended. None of this generates any response.

When Ethel Rae does speak, her voice, animated and forceful, startles Anna Marie and her father into silence. "Zebulon Franklin VanPortfliet! How many times have I told you to clean off your boots before you come in here? I declare, I'll have to remop the whole floor now. And Cleo cries every time I use ammonia."

Henry tries again. "Mom, I'm your son, Hank. Zeb was my father. Anna Marie and I have come to visit you at Glen Pines."

"Didn't you hear what I said? You old coot, I've half a mind not to pull out that huckleberry pie I baked for supper. Now remove those muddy things!"

Henry stares down at his shoes, and then slowly slips off the loafers and lines them up neatly beneath his chair.

"That's better," Ethel Rae says. "You can't be trailing all that manure in here day in and day out and expect me to keep on cleaning it. In Friesland we always took our klompen off at the door, and I made a big mistake by being so lenient with you, junga."

"Yes, ma'am," he mumbles, and shrugs helplessly at Anna Marie, who folds and unfolds her hands in the other chair.

"Grandma?"

h, you're back. Still trying to sell me that second-rate tonic, eh? Well, we don't need it. My Zeb here has pills from the doctor in town. Vitamins, mainly,

but he's healthy as a horse, as you can see."

"She thinks you're the lady from—" Henry whispers, but his mother cuts him off.

"Zeb! Don't cater to those city folk. Next thing you'll know, they'll all be banging on our door. I invited this one in 'cause I like the looks of her, but we've got to watch our P's and Q's. Money's tight these days, with the depression and all, you know," she says, and seems to wink at Anna Marie.

"Can I get anything for you, Mother?"

"No, darling, just get yourself back out there and check on Zeb, Jr., He's been awfully ornery with those cows lately." She begins to rock herself back and forth, talking very fast in Dutch, which Anna Marie has forgotten that her grandmother still knows. The old woman pauses from time to time, as if waiting for someone to answer—or listening to an imaginary reply—and does not acknowledge either of them.

At last, Henry stands and motions for his daughter to follow him. Anna Marie, her voice breaking, adds her goodbye to her father's, but the woman with the robins-egg blue eyes and jingle-bell laugh who used to be her grandmother does not respond.

Neither of them speaks all the way out to the car, where Henry suddenly excuses himself to go back inside and talk to someone from the staff. Anna Marie sinks into the seat and leans forward, her head on the dashboard. It doesn't seem fair. None of it. Her grandmother has retreated into the past, abandoning her as if she never existed. Was the present world so awful that a ninety-year-old woman would prefer to return to a time without jet airplanes and computers and fast-food restaurants and VCR's? Or was this all a cruel joke, a nightmare like the one with Michael that she had thought she was finally waking up from?

"Sometimes she thinks I'm Cleo," her father says when he returns.

It takes a moment to remember. "Your brother? The one who was run over with a tractor?"

enry nods. "I can deal with it when she thinks I'm my dad, but it worries me when she thinks she recognizes a little boy in a grown-up body. My brother was only five. I don't even remember him, really." He shakes his head and sighs. "Other times my ma starts in about the Japs. Sometimes, Joe McCarthy. Last time it was Kennedy's assassination. I never know what decade she's living in, but it sure as hell isn't this one."

"This was a hard one for her." Anna Marie, forgetting about her parents' no-smoking-in-the-car rule, lights a cigarette. Her father doesn't notice.

"I suppose." He sighs again. "She's been so lonely since my dad died, and then all this business with the robbery. For all those years she didn't have to lock a door, and now a bunch of kids just storm in and beat her half to death for a few personal articles. Life is moving too fast for all of us, I guess. So many inventions and changes in how we live. My mother hated it, I think. She wants to go back to a simpler, slower time."

"What about you, Dad?"

"I don't know, honey. I'm retired now, thank God, but I can't say I'd want to go back to being a kid and grow up in this era. Somehow your mom and I managed without all this crap. I can't even fix things any more. They've got toilets that flush when you stand up and faucets that come on and off when you stand in front of the sink."

"Now you're starting to sound like Grandma."

He chuckles. "Maybe. Maybe someday you'll be visiting me back there."

"Just don't mistake me for mom if I do," she threatens, and they laugh together.

"Hey, what are you doing smoking in my car?"

She crushes the cigarette—her third in fifteen minutes—in the ashtray. "Sorry, Dad."

e rolls his eyes and turns off at their exit, and Anna Marie realizes it's the first time in years the two of them have had a conversation that didn't revolve around the erratic plumbing in her house or her childhood. Or Michael. And not once today has she had to holler or raise her voice to accommodate his hearing aid.

* * *

With the key her father gave her, Anna Marie drives out to the farm the following weekend to pick up some things for Grandmother. "The nurses said she needs more underwear and socks and things like that," Henry said. "You're better at that kind of thing, and your mother still cannot face all this. She sits around marking up the Bible with red ink, muttering about how the Second Coming is at hand, and now I'm beginning to wonder if I've got two loonies on my hands." He forces a tired smile, but his daughter cannot respond.

"Naw, you go alone," Michael said when she invited him along. "The whole thing's too morbid for me. Besides, I want to finish this," he insists, gesturing at his latest Talking Book.

Although he continues to reassure her that he could never do away with himself, Michael seems to have slowed down his lif to a snail's pace, Anna Marie thinks as sh unlocks the farmhouse.

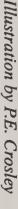
The familiar smell, a mixture of lilac porpourri and stale pipe tobacco, greets her if the living room. She sinks down if Grandmother's chair, beside the gree kerosene lamp painted with pink daisies overwhelmed. Her parents admitted that the farmhouse and its contents might be auctioned off soon. "The management at Gle Pines has been more than fair," her mother explained, "but it costs nearly three thousand dollars a month to keep your grandmother there, and you know your father and I cannot afford..."

o one can afford such rates

Anna Marie agrees to hersel now. What will she do if he own parents get too old and it to care for themselves? Wh will take care of her and Michael in their ol age? Lately she has been wondering if thing would have been better—or easier—fc Michael if they had had children. Maybe it not too late. Maybe it would even be an idea situation, now that they would not have thire day care. But she shakes her head knowing that she is not ready. May never be And Michael has never brought up the subject.

A photo album rests on the coffee table and she picks it up and flips the pages. He grandmother must have been looking at recently, or maybe her father dragged it ou There's Ethel Rae, smiling, with her chest nut hair braided atop her head, wearing a sh smile as she tosses handfuls of corn to th chickens. In another snapshot she holds bab Cleo in her lap, with Anna Marie's fathe standing stiffly behind them in his Sunda best. As she continues to turn the pages, he grandparents' lives move faster and faster like the stacks of slightly altered image drawn by the early animated cartoonists Childhood, marriage, parenthood, grandpar enthood. The photos continue to fast forwar until, eventually, the faces seem to fade ou and only Grandma's silvery white hai appears in the family shots. But in all of th photos, even the oldest ones that have take on a brownish tint, Ethel Rae's eyes seem to follow Anna Marie's gaze, as if trying to tel her something.

But what is she telling me, Anna Mari wonders. Good-bye? That she's in pain nov and needs help? That a lifetime dissolve





day by day, as quickly and irrevocably as a maple tree sheds its leaves each autumn—no matter how much we want to prolong the seasons of our lives and how many things we invent to ensure that?

She stands and shakes the dust from the doilies on the armrests. She has never been here alone before, in the rooms where her grandmother spent most of her life, the past decade alone, coping with the loneliness. Anna Marie tries to imagine living in her own house without Michael. Who would I talk to, share things with, eat meals with, invite to go places? But Michael does it most of the time, she realizes. The hours she spends there with him have dwindled to hours spent sleeping and occasional spans of time devoted to studying or errands.

been the one to suddenly lose most of her vision, would she be able to deal with all the hours without companionship? At least Michael has the dogs, she reminds herself, but wonders just how much her forced absences bother him. Would he be happier, more adjusted, maybe, if she stayed home more often? But it cannot be helped, she tells herself, and gets up to retrieve some of her grandmother's things.

Her grandmother is down the hall having lunch, the floor attendant explains when Anna Marie shows up at Glen Pines with a cardboard box and an overnight bag filled with Ethel Rae's things. "You can leave that stuff in her room and go find her," the woman suggests.

But Michael is waiting at home. Waiting for her to finish filling out their tax forms, drive him to the hardware store, read him the mail. Now that she sees for two, she no longer has the luxury of long afternoons sharing milk and cookies with her grandmother. She feels pushed and pulled in all directions, stretched taut like the pie dough Ethel Rae used to pummel and then press out in all directions with the rolling pin until she had a paper-thin crust.

Now Ethel Rae cannot be trusted in the kitchen, let alone any place else. Before Anna Marie's father checked her into Glen Pines, he found her building a log fire in the middle of the kitchen floor. Twice Ethel Rae wandered through the carports in the condominium complex by the house in search of her cows. "She wouldn't believe that the farm was almost gone, and the cattle sold off," Henry told Anna Marie. "She thought I was a rustler and had taken them."

nna Marie glances at her watch, but lunch won't be over for thirty minutes. If she tells her grandmother she's here, Ethel Rae might refuse to eat. Or she might not know who Anna Marie is.

In Ethel Rae's room, Anna Marie opens the window and allows an unseasonably warm

breeze to blow in. She works quickly, hanging a pair of her dead grandfather's trousers and elastic suspenders in the closet. The tenyear-old prescription bottles with Zeb's name typed on the yellowing labels go on the bathroom counter, although she has already emptied them. On the small desk she carefully places her grandmother's cherished Blue Willow platter, a corn cob pipe she picked up yesterday at the five-and-dime, and two foil pouches of tobacco—the closest she could come to the brand her grandfather smoked.

If I cannot bring grandmother back, she thinks as she sneaks down the hall and out to the parking lot, if I cannot circumvent the crossed wires of the mental time machine that has whisked her away—the least I can do is bring the past to meet her halfway. Next week she will return to Glen Pines, will try again to convince Ethel Rae she is her granddaughter and not a peddler. Next week she will drive her grandmother out to visit Michael. Next week she will try harder to turn on the lights that have been extinguished from so many eyes.

Judi A. Rypma lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The Making of Memories

Like a night that never ends and a day that rivals our ideas of perfection, their rendezvous was all they hoped after being so far apart each other's presence was unsettling something strangely not of this daily routine world and not at all what they expected from the connections in their lives

—Sara L. Holt Nipomo, California

Comforters

Cautious as ever,
we stare at each other
over the breakfast table
but really look beyond
the droning simplicity
of married couples in the morning
to the rose-colored wallpaper,
cups hanging on pegs,
singing coffee pot.

We both shook life and this is what finally fell out. Is it what we wanted? We look into the eyes of the missing children of the photographs on the milk cartons. We are somewhere among them.

You gaze out the window to where the red Chevette you had before our marriage preens itself in cold morning sun. You wish it could zip backwards.

I still have my Sax Rohmer collection. I scoured a thousand flea markets and run-down bookstores for first editions of *Bat Wing* and *Brood Of The Witch Queen*. Amid the excitement of their yellow pages, even those killed violently are living better than I am.

—John Grey Providence, Rhode Island

Twenty Years

I have nothing to ask of you that you have not already given over the course of two decades. Your love for me balanced, clear like one bell. Sometimes when I am lost, I begin

to search for someone to find me.
Then soon realize
I have already been found by the man who came in from the snow on the coldest night.
He finds me here, again and again.

An Executive's Daydream

I loved the whole
Of a girl once
Across seventy-three hundred days in space
Where a sweet Bell
Told the air
In what rhythms
To move
And felt
How hummingbirds do
When they hover
And wonder
What twenty winters
Have done
To her

—Donald Alahiyi Salisbury, North Carolina





Turning Forty

J. B.

John Bryan Duke Born 18 October 1923 Died 28 October 1953

We all bought clothes
That matched the green
Still in his eyes
And wore cut flowers
That carried hope
That matched the moment
Like the paper on the walls
Silk sheets, white powder today—
Tomorrow, Earth's feast

—Donald Alahiyi Salisbury, North Carolina I lie awake, rueful at the brevity of summer's touch upon my brow—a mother's promise to a wayward child, of honeyed days and sinsweet nights, if only I behaved.

Now autumn's breath is cold against my ear: secret rites in whispers for tomorrow; and I fight sleep knowing that no vernal arms wait to cradle me at the end of this long year.

—Dianne Borsenik Elyria, Ohio

Anniversary

Two coffins.
Two flowers.
Two wives.
Two children.
Two houses.
One death.

—T. Anders Carson Portland, Ontario, Canada

Mission Accomplished

On January 28, 1986 the *Challenger* space shuttle flashed down

job unfinished but complete like Schubert's Eighth

in a split second from space to sea bottom

the dedicated crew and the thousand thousands who watched

brought to bedrock out of glimmering sunbeams and haze

the unfound and the quandary the change changing into change

and all that love
the immortal as it always was
the hunger for rest, at rest.

—Ida Fasel Denver, Colorado

STRANGER THAN FICTION

(An Anniversary Story)

by E. R., The Coffee Friend

ur twenty-fifth anniversary was not much fun. My husband had sold his business, had not been working for a few months, and was suffering from pain in a degenerative hip joint. We went away for the weekend with friends to celebrate, but he spent most of the time in our room because he found it too painful to walk very far. He underwent hip-replacement surgery a few weeks later but was unable to find work until just two weeks before our twenty-sixth anniversary. I was determined to make this anniversary special, much better than our last.

I decided to invite my husband to a quasiillicit tryst with an overnight stay at a local hotel/resort complex. But how could I make it a surprise? While reading the newspapers one day, I happened upon the personal ads in our local paper, the *TIMES*. I would send him a personal ad of my own.

I studied the personal ads and then wrote:

LIMITED TIME OFFER
Middle-aged MWF who likes
to swim, read, and bike ISO
middle-aged MWM, engineertype who flies in old airplanes
and likes to visit sewage treatment plants for good time. If
interested, come to the Radisson
at 6 p.m. Friday. You'll find me
sitting by the pool with a rose
in my hair.

My secretary typed it to match the other ads in the paper so I could insert it into part of a page I had torn out. I forgot to bring it home with me that night and so had to lie to my husband, telling him I was going to the drug store when I really went back to the office to pick up the ad. My secretary had added, on a note clipped to the paper, "Sewage treatment plant—sounds pretty kinky to me." (Editors are everywhere.)

While my husband was shaving and showering the next morning, I hurriedly packed an overnight bag for both of us, shoving it into the closet when he suddenly appeared in the bedroom. He usually left the house right after breakfast—he was so glad to be working again—but this morning he leisurely read the paper and smoked his pipe. (Men!) After he finally left, I put the ad into an envelope, wrote his name on it, and left it on the counter where he would see it when he came home for lunch.

I then went out to join a friend for coffee, telling her all about my anniversary plan and what I had already gone through trying to carry it out. After coffee, I went on to work and my friend went to a local stationery store. My husband was there, having left work to pick up his safety glasses and deciding while he was out to buy me an anniversary gift. My friend startled the clerk by pointing out to my husband that he was in the wrong store for buying an anniversary gift and reminding him that there was a jewelry store nearby. He laughed but bought me the desk set in spite of her advice.

made sure that I finished my own work in time to stop and buy myself a rose and get to the Radisson before 5:45. When I found that one rose would cost \$12, I gave up that idea, hoping he would recognize me without it. I checked in, went to my room and changed into my swim suit, then grabbed a book and headed to the pool. I seated myself by the pool, stationing my chair so I could watch the doorway.

Soon it was 6:15. Since he always got home from work before I did, I decided that he must have stopped somewhere on the way to the Radisson to buy me the perfect anniversary gift. By 6:30, I was becoming somewhat anxious, and by 6:45 I had visions of his lying insensible, undiscovered in some ditch. I wondered how the paramedics would ever find me to notify me of the accident since very few people knew about this tryst. By 7:00 I was absolutely frightened. I attempted to figure out what could have happened to the envelope, trying to talk myself out of believing in the accident scenario.

At 7:15 I went back to my room and called home. He answered on the second ring. When he realized who it was, he asked, "Where are you?"

I said, impatiently, "There's an envelope on the counter with your name on it. Did you open it and read it?"

"No," he answered. "I thought that it was an anniversary card and decided to wait until you got home."

"Open it and read it," I said, not very pleasantly, I'm afraid. As I heard the envelope being torn open, he again asked, "Where are you?"

"READ THE NOTE!"

After a short pause, he said, "Are you at the Radisson? Why are you at the Radisson?"

I said, "Have you read the ad? Don't you understand?"

"I'll be there in thirty minutes," he answered.

When he arrived, I was waiting for him near the front desk. He brought with him only a shaving kit, which, of course, was as good as a public announcement to any interested bystanders that he had come to stay just overnight.

We managed to have a civil dinner, finally beginning to laugh about the mix-up. He confessed that he had held the envelope up to the window and, seeing the word *TIME* through it, thought I had gotten him a subscription to *TIME* magazine, which he didn't feel was worth opening without me there.

I had envisioned a leisurely breakfast the next morning, but he was up early, dressing quickly, announcing that he needed to get to work. He left by 7:00 a.m. I didn't have to be at work until ten, but I was angry so I just went home—to find the unromantic desk set that he had gotten me at the stationery store.

t was, overall, an anniversary that I will never forget, although my husband denies most of it ever really happening the way I tell it. My coffee friend especially enjoyed my twenty-sixth anniversary. I'm glad someone did.

The Coffee Friend, writing for the anniversary couple who wishes to remain anonymous, lives in Northwest Indiana.

5x10

Combine:

Gallons of patience,
Cups of youth,
Zests of faith,
Loads of sunshine.

Bring to a boil.

Add:

Pinches of trust,
Pints of tears,
Dashes of time,
Heaps of emotion.
Reduce to a simmer.

Fold in:

2 whole hearts, Hundreds of kisses, Tons of kindness, Bushels of passion.

Add enough:

"Sugar and spice
And everything nice,"
That will serve four.
"Toads and snails
And puppy dog tails,"
For one.

Stirring occasionally For the next Fifty years.

—Chris Mauch Merrillville, Indiana

Euphemism

"But you don't look that old," is what I've heard for years. Now I'm fifty, and to ease the pain, I'll call this year my Golden Jubilee. After all—Victoria got away with it.
But then she was a queen.

Half a century, and my hair does look the part: sun-like, straight out of the bottle. So many changes in this life, a different me at every turn on the board.

We toy with life, as if we get a second round, but then we're all "old fools," pretending we'll be here for next week's game.

—Linda McMillan Valparaiso, Indiana



Going Upstream

All men are Noah's sons

—Richard Wilbur,
from "New and Collected Poems," 1988

The thing that we were looking for was birds, and we have no fame, and no one loves us, but the boat gives a little, receives our laurels, and the River levels with us. My cousin takes the tiller, teases the bark upstream, against a flow of life which begins in the hills and trickles, faucets, to current. We pass ourselves on the way up, I gather—four or five blue heron, innumerable butterflies big as bats (I am myopic yes, I shall call them bats, bats-by-day! when I improve this tale of swimming up River, this fight against the mainstream's grain) crows with wings as wonder-wide as hawks'; fish, and the angler's tornfree catch; a rockfish dead upon the surface tension; October leaves from maples, oaks, red like persimmons, Golden Delicious—yellow, sliding toward us, breaking to the prow, fallen up to the reflected trees, dropping away again as bow parts boughs.



Near where the Clinch River begins begins my father's story: he's eighty; our trip to the old home place might be his last ride anywhere.

Like FDR bent for Yalta, he is in command, and dying, en route to James Prior Farmer's empire. Nothing remains but the stone chimney—still one lime-rock-stout, but one crumbled, fog-acidified. The stone foundation proves to be, of all our walls, most talkative; they Atlas-bore the living space and cry to me, *The family room is full of trees—watch where you go!*

Where my great-grandmother snapped beans, and rocked, a cedar grows, straight through the weave of her chair, deadcenter of her heart. Where Father poses for a photograph, a kettle cooled; behind him, corn popped, batter alchemized to pone, rabbit stewed or rode the spit in circles like a crossed Christ within thunder-smoke. James Prior leafed his Good Book by fire, felt the Tomb for a chimney, saw God wrought up in tongues of flames, figured the force of the flued-up blast could not help but roll away the stone.



TVA staked James Prior's land for the people, moved the persons out, dammed the Clinch eight miles down River, made Lake Norris, deluged the best bottomland in Franklin— East Tennessee—and passed the current of the Clinch in and out of turbines. And Roosevelt saw that it was good. Now, the River, below the ridge where the ruins we profane are roosting, is half-again as wide as it was and floods, for keeps, the priceless bankfront, where Hickory Cane timbered in the silted mineralish muck: the melons lost their ballasts—some unmoored their vines and bobbed downstream to buoy up on the nearest bend and congregate, faceless heads (the decent thing was done-most graves of family moved to higher ground, many now lost—to the hills, drowned among trees and undergrowth). When the River finally rose one last time, and pushed by men, it rose forever, to new depths, the ruins still rise above, where fog and sky have compromised, and to each other's lips raise still the past and the rain, the rain that makes us.

—Gale Acuff Lubbock, Texas

THE GYPSY WAGON

by Tim Ness

ichards held back as Booty and Cohen went ahead to look for the penny arcade. They had already been to some of the sideshows. They had watched a at man chew up nails and light bulbs and ad spoken with an "Elephant Woman" with hick, gray, ulcerated skin, who had to live er life in a tub of water to keep from turnng into stone. Booty and Cohen had each von a dollar or two tossing dice, and the arny had gotten mad at them for getting out efore he had a chance to win his money ack.

"Sportsmanship works both ways!" the arny had shouted at them, as they ran off vith his quarters jingling in their pockets.

Earlier, only seconds after leaving lichards' parents at the stock show, Booty ad stopped to light a cigarette, and Richards ad glanced back over his shoulder to make ure that his parents had gone inside. Now lichards stared up at the ferris wheel as it ifted its riders above the tops of the tall cotonwoods. The din of the crowd, the recordd calliope music, and the cries of the barkrs all assaulted him, and he had to force the ounds back out of his thoughts so he could oncentrate.

Behind the maze of neon lights and carnial rides flowed the river. Its surface caught he blues and oranges of the neon tubes and cattered them over the water in a series of rembling images that kept threatening to lisintegrate but somehow held their basic hapes against the slowly moving current. or fifty-one weeks of the year, the grass iere was untrampled, and when you walked past you could hear fish jumping out in the iver. It was hard to imagine then that a show ike this ever took place.



And Richards hadn't gambled and made money like Cohen and Booty had. He only had three dollars left now of the five that his father had given him.

Elephant Woman's skin was a rubber suit.

ooty kept going on and on about how he had made enough gambling to play the penny arcade for free. But before they'd found the right tent, he had stopped to look at tables covered with

knives. Richards scanned the knife tables

Now Richards watched his feet to keep from tripping over the dozens of power cords that lay stretched across the grass. His stomach rumbled at the smell of fried sausages, french fries, and cotton candy, and he dodged the elderly fortune teller that reached out for him from the folding chair in front of her tent, addressing him by the wrong name.

So far, the whole evening had been like this. Like Cohen had said, the light bulbs the fat man ate were made of sugar and the while Booty hefted the blades. He saw no kitchen knives, no whittling knives, no jack knives with assortments of useful blades. Instead, the tables offered throwing knives, stilettos, daggers in ankle sheaths, and fifteen-inch beheading knives. The knives displayed here made Richards want to look away. But now that he'd let them get into his thoughts, he'd keep on thinking about them, whether he wanted to or not. He'd keep imagining them, baring their edges like mean smiles, or lurking in his pocket, patiently awaiting his careless hand.

ooty bought a mock switchblade, one of those without a spring where you had to swing the blade out with a flick of the wrist. He threatened both Cohen and Richards with it, just kidding around, flicking the blade in and out toward them until Cohen finally made him put it away.

Inside the game tent, Cohen and Booty tried to lift trinkets out of a glass box with a miniature crane. Then they went down the length of the tent, tilting all the pinball machines. Booty strutted, trying to scare younger kids who were only there to play. Richards glanced over his shoulder to keep an eye on the attendant as Cohen punched dirty words into an aluminum medallion that he would hang around his neck.

But Richards was already bored with the games and did not want to play. The only reason he had come to the carnival was because his parents had insisted. When he'd complained, they had gotten him going again by telling him he could invite his friends. Even then, he would have refused to come altogether if it hadn't been for the snakes.

He sensed the snake tent coming closer now and he narrowed his eyes to shut out the confusion of the carnival. He wanted to think about stalking snakes in the jungle. He wanted the snakes of his imagination to hang from jungle trees, as their cat-eyes followed him and their forked tongues flickered in and out. In his thoughts, virulently toxic green mambas mimicked hanging vines. A constrictor as long as a house flopped on a jaguar from a tree. A deadly pit viper drove its dripping fangs into the heart of an unsuspecting rabbit.

But the scene inside the snake tent quickly countered this reverie.

"Look at the rotten, dirty things," Booty said.

"They give me the shivers," Cohen said to Richards. "I don't know what you see in them."

Richards guessed he was drawn to the bright colors of the snakes. He liked the way a snake's spots moved in increments as it crept toward its prey. The spots created an optical illusion so that the snake always seemed to be standing still even as it glided steadily into striking position. And he liked the way a snake could appear, then slip away again, so that its tail faded out of his frame of vision just as he was reaching for it, like a thought that got away on him even as he was trying to pin it down. He wouldn't deny that some of the snakes were lethal. But it wasn't their fault if their saliva could kill.

Now, looking around the tent at the displays, he saw an African rock python as wide as a football, rattlesnakes with cat-like eyes, a Gabon viper, its body as big around as his calf, with a triangular head the size and shape of a wedge of pie. He liked thinking that such animals still lived, that their jungles were still unconquered.

But, instead of dangling from tropical lianas, these snakes lay coiled in dirty glass cages. The filmy eyes of some made it plain that their prey-stalking days were over. Many of them had no luster to their skins, were covered with raised sores, or had spines and ribs that showed through their scales. A king cobra, dull blue and black and a good twelve feet long, lay with its head upside down, its jaws gaping open in death.

Richards wished now that he would have skipped it. He knew how the images of the neglected animals would stick in his thoughts. He would think about them when he was trying to study for tests or finish his homework. Already he felt that he had to do something about what he had seen. He had to help the snakes get back to the jungle where they belonged.

Outside with his friends, he scanned the rows of canvas signs suspended over the tents that lined the outer circle of the midway. The paintings of Mongo, the 1000-Pound Wonder Boy, and Sasha, the Cat Woman, stared down on the midway. A carny called him over to throw balls at gifts fastened to wooden cards. Richards turned away, walking, sick of everything now.

On the other side of the road, by the last row of trees where the midway ended and the river bank sloped down to the water, stood an ornate wooden wagon. With its carved moldings and dozens of ornamenta windows, it looked like the type tha Richards had seen in a book about gypsies But instead of the bright blues, yellows, and reds of the gypsy wagons, this one was fin ished in a highly polished brown, like a violin or a cello.

"Hey, come on!" shouted Booty. "We're going to the fun house!"

"Go on ahead!" Richards called. "I'll catclup!"

The clamor of the midway fell behind hin as he approached the wagon. Richards had never seen anything like it. And it looked like the exhibit was free. At least, there was no fence or ticket booth in front of it. He heard Booty and Cohen approaching behind him as he stopped before the display.

"What the hell," said Booty.

"Okay, I know what this is," Cohen said abruptly. He turned his back on the display and walked stiffly back toward the rides.

"I'm right behind you!" Booty said, turning to follow him.

Richards stared into one of the wagon's many windows as his friends' footsteps faded into silence. The dead woman's face did not even seem to stare back from the photograph. The eye sockets were sunker pits with dirty scabs along the lids. The jaw was shriveled up like a rotten orange and dangled as if ready to fall away from the res of the head.

ichards moved on to the nex window. Orderly lines of naked people stood in front of bulldozed pits, before soldiers with machine guns. Immaculately uniformed officers stood off to the side poised to issue orders. In another photo, soldiers had piled up corpses in an equally orderly fashion. The dead lay in long, rectangular stacks, lined up in rows, with hundreds of emaciated bodies in every one Some were naked. Some were still dressed in the striped suits of prisoners. Some bared their teeth, images of their anger and suffering frozen forever in death. Richards remembered reading about these things ir school. But reading hadn't prepared him for anything like this.

"Do you like my wagon?" a voice asked. Richards started at the sound of the voice He expected to be grabbed by the arm and

led off to some stupid game that he had obligated himself to play by stopping to look without paying.

Photo by hap

It's all right," Richards said, backing off a p. The man's smile made him suspicious. It he didn't look like a carny. If it hadn't en for his trace of an accent, he could have en anyone from town.

I made it myself," the man explained. 's handmade. . . of solid walnut. With the ollwork, the sanding, and all the coats of rnish. . . well, you can imagine what a proti it was!" He gestured to it, proudly, as if spoke for itself. "The wheels were the rdest part," he noted. "No one who has er made one will take the wheel for grant-"

It's like a violin," Richards said, running fingers over the edge of the window me.

I wanted a finish that would accent the hibits," the man said. "And something that ouldn't detract from the display locations. ith the trees and the river, it's an ideal spot my wagon, you see—a spot for people to like to look at things and think about they've seen."

Nobody's going to pay to see this," chards pointed out.

There is no charge for the exhibit," the an said. "If you wish, you can make a nation." He pointed to a slot marked for purpose. "But that isn't the importanting."

Then why go to all this trouble for nothg?" Richards asked.

I'm afraid you misunderstand," the man id. "This exhibit is not a sideshow, you e, but a traveling museum. The phographs are real. These things really hapned."

Richards glanced at the pictures, then back the man, than back at the pictures again. Eliked the way the man didn't talk to him the he was a kid. Only Cohen's parents had er spoken to him like this before, as if mething that he thought could matter.

We read about this in school," Richards id.

Then I don't need to explain to you," the an said, with a shrug. "It's a matter of histy."

Richards circled the wagon, looking. He dn't know how much longer he wanted to ng around. He didn't like what he was seeg, but it was too late to protect himself. So just kept staring—at smiling corpses and rprised-looking corpses, corpses stacked beside ovens and corpses being wheeled to ovens. Some of the windows contained



articles instead of pictures: an ornate dagger with a swastika, gold fillings extracted from teeth, a canister of poison gas pellets turned sideways so they would spill out.

Richards rested his hand against the wagon and stared down at his shoes.

"It must be dealt with," the man said, softly.

"It's evil," Richards said, unwilling to look back at the displays.

"Yes," the man said, his voice still soft, yet excited. "It is a face of evil!"

Richards glanced back behind him at the midway of the carnival, where the faces in the crowd now seemed to run through their expressions like characters in a silent movie.

ooty and Cohen sat across the road by a hamburger stand, eating. Cohen watched Richards intently but without recognition. Booty waved him over, and his voice broke through the haze with a strange, quavering quality.

"C'mon," Booty shouted. "We're going to the fun house!"

Richards glanced back at the man.

"If you wish to know more about this period of history, I can tell you," the man went on. "There is much here that is important—much that will serve you during your life."

But Richards turned away. He had never noticed before the way his feet held on to the ground beneath him like hands, even through the soles of his shoes. Now they carried him away from the wagon, toward the crowded midway that still moved, as if in a cloud of silence, before him.

"I can tell you about the electric fences and the dogs!" the man called out behind him. "I can tell you how they murdered the people!"

But Richards could hear the music and the crowd now, and his friends and the carnival were almost at hand.

Tim Ness lives in Grand Forks, North Dakota.



the yahrzeit
(anniversary)

I

When I came into this room a year ago

My father was lying on his bed almost like the last time I left him. But there was no more *Papa* in this room and I felt the coldness of his hand.

Even after, when I sang the Kaddish and when I saw the only meaning of land when I hold his picture repeating one of the first words I'd ever said—Papa, Papa, for a thousand times at night, Breathing, even after I thought I'd damned God.

I'd always been back to this room—to touch his clothes, to feel the plain sharpness of the wood in his bed. I'd always been back to that time when I first thought that the silence is so empty and the air is not a thing but the tongue of soundlessness. Back to my worst, my most wanted wish to become deaf—to escape it in my own, life-lasting silence, not to hear words, as if they all are false like my own life, I wanted to see the accent in no sound.

It was a perfect time to hear my father's voice.

H

As we are sitting here, in the dining room by the white table just the three of us, and my mother tells of a new actress whose restless destiny brought her down here to Rochester, N.Y. And my brother says of his wish to show to his love the modern plays and I then interrupt telling that I dislike the modernism on the stage as much as I liked Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. And this word brings the silence to all of us. Then my brother tenderly tells me as he saw me, decades ago, alone in a theater, a four-year-old child. He said that it seemed to him as if Swan Lake was in my eyes.

And I know this moment too, as my father had left me, alone in the darkness of a theater's lodge together with Swan Lake.

As I saw the ballet and wished it to last forever and a longer time, and my whole child's life. As I was afraid that the light would soon be on and my Papa would not be back, but He was.

And I see in the eyes of my loved ones the same thought of my father, in the heavens now, where he might be watching Swan Lake.

> —Ilya V. Kaminsky Penfield, New York

On My Last Trip To Australia

It is the schoolyard that strikes me, how wide and open and wooden it is compared to the brick-warehouse face of its American counterpart, not built away from the world but out of it, cut from the pines of its surrounding hills, cemented into place by the sands of its nearby beaches, spare but eloquent like a lazy, sun-slowed waltz, with so much room for input from the fig trees and the white-headed tropical grasses and even the odd tomato plant growing wild and free as children in the far corner of the cricket field.



And I'll stand and watch this new generation dance lovingly on my memories in yellow and gray short-sleeved shirts and shorts that parade their knees in a gallery of scabs and scars, holding myself up on the rickety iron fence but on the past as well, that willing support of all things for all time. I've done this, done that, I tell myself, my stillness like an ineffective paperweight atop their giddy, flapping sheets of energy. I stared out of those windows, a restless, thumb-flapping prisoner of classrooms, skated those long wooden verandas, laughed at their sagging angles and creaky history, stood at mind-numbing attention on that black tar courtyard, ran those random pathways

behind the toilets. by the caretaker's office, into the flowing meadow where freedom was sketched hastily with worm-like limbs and skinny voices, even tossed a Rugby ball about in games played between teams of upward of twenty five, one in t-shirts, the other with naked bony chests for perfect distinction. Once I stood outside the headmaster's office shivering like a winter sail, awaiting punishment for some imagined crime or other, my faith, my courage no bigger than these urchins who scatter like breaths before the circles of my thoughts. It's not the hiss of the cane that cuts through this echoing cathedral of years or the pain of stinging bone and eyes surrendering too easily to tears but the triumph afterwards as I emerged from that den of authority, squeezing the hurt out through my grin, beaming louder than playground noise, the way I feel now, as I turn away from myself, victim victorious.

—John Grey Providence, Rhode Island



Recital (August 5, 1945)

here framed in our west window, flanked by wilting funeral wreaths, the girl, poised for the attack, bends and from memory begins her obbligati: Kreisler, Schumann, Liszt, for a father lately fallen on the field

now bowing to her task, she seeks out keys as her mother might brass buttons from a tin: a figure from a Dutch interior, stray wisps of copper hair touched by the evening sun forming a halo of fire about her face

as over there
a new light dawns,
puts out
the rising sun,
burns the shadow
of its song
into the stones,
all sounds
eclipsed,
untuned
in a white
percussion
of the sphere

here
in the window now
the broken sun
in shards lies
beneath a blooming cloud,
slender fingers
flutter across
the keys, to rise
from their Liebestraumerei:
the wings of
cranes
unfolding
into purpling skies

—Daniel R. Barnes Columbus, Ohio









Family Heirloom

John P. Shultz, a German woodcrafter, came to America in 1859 to escape religious persecution with little more than the strength in his hands and his staunch Catholicism. He married a fellow countrywoman, Mary Paschen, in 1865 and in the spring of that year made all the furnishings for the house that they shared on fifty acres of fertile Indiana soil. After a fire destroyed their beloved homestead, the only surviving creation was a chest of drawers which had been fatefully abandoned in one of the barns. Over the years it had lived with different family members and, being a practical piece, it held many cherished articles. Once contained in its interior were table linens well-used during every holiday, christening and wedding gowns, many old photographs, dried corsages of love and sorrow. Somewhere along the lineage, it met an evil kismet with an orange-ochre enamel, masking the beauty of the artisan's uncluttered design of German practicality. One-hundred twenty-five years later this family artifact Was gently received into my loving fourth-generation hands. I carefully removed the layers of hideous paint to discover the cool, smooth grain of solid walnut and the fading signature of my great-grandfather, John P. Shultz. Once again, it breathes the air of immigrant freedom, in the fittingly hallowed hall of my German-built home, circa 1860. Every year in the spring as it becomes yet another year older, I glorify this simple chest with a lavender spectrum of lilacs that once grew in such purple profusion on the family land. The scent of this May crowning brings forth sweet memories of God's touch which imparted annual comfort to His hard-working people. The shrine of John P. Shultz, a humble life remembered by this yearly ritual of ancestral preservation. It will continue to be carried down the winds of ages, with the fragrance of lilacs and a great-granddaughter's love.

Young Writers



Illustration by Rhede Rhode.

Shirley Jo Moritz

THE TOMATO TREE

by Christine Pacyk

y friend, Jeff, and I spent the long summer days searching for treasures in the new homes that were being built. It was that summer, six years ago, that Jeff and I found our tree—the perfect climbing tree. The tree had branches that seemed to spiral upward like a staircase and a nice V-shaped pocket—the perfect place to build a tree fort. The tree was tall, but not too tall. Dense leaves seemed to curl around it and prevented light from penetrating. Our tree even had a knothole so we could hide our valuables.

It was in this tree that we decided to build a tree fort. We worked on our fort through the hot, sticky summer days, using spare wood and nails left from the carpenters. When we were finished, we had a floor in between the V, and a whip that we swung from. Jeff was Tarzan and I was Jane. We furnished our tree with all the necessities—a small radio, lemonade (the kind in the canister), candy and all the super heroes: Superman, Spiderman, Batman and The Incredible Hulk. Jeff even carved our names into the tree because he had seen it somewhere on TV.

Together, Jeff and I were a small army. We had booby-trapped the trail toward our tree fort and had plenty of ammo at hand. We had the best tree house in the world, so naturally, we had to defend it from tree-snatchers. We sent quite a few of them home crying to their mommies. Battle was never a pretty sight. The tree-snatchers usually came in hordes of about a hundred or so. They came armed with swords, crafted of the finest willow and birch, garbage can covers for shields and pots for helmets. They were a tough group, but didn't stand a chance against our rottentomato bombs, mud-balls and various other trajectory objects.

As the summer drew to a close, we witnessed the completion of the homes. Cold brick and aluminum siding blocked out most of the wind that ruffled the leaves of our tree. The earth movers were preparing for the final phase of their destruction. Some higher power had decided that our tree was not beautiful enough and could not add to

the aesthetic value of the homes. In other words, someone had decided that our tree had to go. Of course, we couldn't let this happen. Fortunately, we had an enormous supply of ammunition. All we had to do was wait.

For hours we crouched in the tree, waiting to pounce when, at last, the earth mover puffed toward the back of the lot where our tree stood proudly above the rest. As the machine roared within throwing distance, Jeff sent a giant rotten tomato plummeting through the air.

"Bombs away," he screamed.

His aim was true, and the tomato slid off the forehead of the driver. I joined in the hurling of mud and tomatoes. Soon, we had our greatest foe on the run. He just climbed out of the metal monster and dashed for the safety of a house.

When we were sure he was gone, we cheered and brought out our secret stash of slightly warm root beer and Crunch bars in celebration.

"Did you see his face? He must have thought it was the end of the world."

"Yeah," I said. "We sure got him. It was best when you hit him with that tomato. He'll never come back!"

I leaned back against the tree and guzzled my pop. In the distance, I heard sirens.

"Probably an accident," I said as the sound grew nearer.

"What? Oh, yeah, an accident."

We both faded into silence. I was adding the foil from my Crunch bar onto our foil ball when I first saw the flashing lights round the corner and turn into a freshly tarred driveway.

"I think we're in trouble," I said.

"Nah, we have to defend our tree."

"But he's got a gun. Do you think he'll shoot us?"

"Are you crazy, Jen. We're just kids. Right now, we have to keep them away. We were here first."

"Okay," I hesitated.

Once again, Jeff took the first shot, hitting the officer squarely in the chest with a tomato.

"All right, kids, come out of that tree. If

you come down now you'll get off easier...."

Another tomato hit the cop in the leg.

"If I have to come up there, you are not going to be very happy and neither are your parents!"

"Jeff, do you think we ought to give up? I mean, we never faced anyone like this before."

"No way! What are you, chicken? We're in this together."

ith that, we hurled toma-

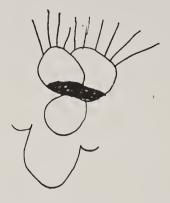
toes, one after the other, at the advancing officer. Unlike the earth-mover's driver, the cop kept coming until he was directly below us. We could see his yellow teeth and the gleam in his eye as tomato seeds ran down the sides of his face. I chucked one final tomato at the officer as he pulled Jeff and me down from the branches of our tree.

As if to announce to the world, "Here are two juvenile delinquents," the cop kept his lights flashing all the way home. It was the only time I'd ever ridden in a police car. At any other time, the ride would have been an adventure. I didn't even get to try the siren. Instead, I got grounded for the rest of the summer.

The next day, before dinner, I snuck out of my house and over to the construction site. For a brief second in the bright sunlight, I thought the tree still stood. I walked closer and saw Jeff sitting on the stump of that humbled tree. No words were passed as I ran my hand over the growth rings in farewell. Then, I hopped on my bike and slowly pedaled home into the sunset, just like in all the Lone Ranger movies.

Christine Pacyk, Age 18, attends Wheeling High School in Wheeling, Illinois.

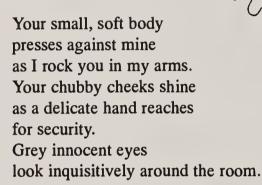
masks



I wear a mask upon my face It covers religion, it covers race I put on the mask to hide my fear And the mask changes each day, each year For when I take off the mask, I show the real me And I just don't understand what I see I feel so scared But this fear I share With everyone in the world Big tall young old

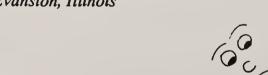
> —Larissa Claybourne, Age 12 Diamond, Ohio





Two months and eight days you are. The product of a quarrel that lingers in my past, part of another love, destructive to my soul. Yet, you make me laugh.

—Shannon Winston-Dolan, Age 15 Evanston Township High School Evanston, Illinois



by Amanda Diehl, Age 13, Merrillville, Indiana

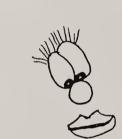




Her face is pale in the early light Dark circles surround her eyes A bright green bruise accents her cheek She applies foundation to disguise the bruise Under the powder used to add color The eyes she covers with a shade of blue Then lines with black mascara Cheeks are uplifted with rosy pink And her lips she glosses with red This is the mask she chooses to wear To hide the truth of her life.

-Roxann Chapman, Grade 12 Iola, Kansas









Ode To Anna

Watching in awe, as you colored between the lines. Admiring the skillful way you painted your lips with that funny pink stick. Laughing as we sang Barry Manilow songs, so loud the china rattled in the cabinets.

Thinking that you had the sweetest voice in the world. Knowing that you loved me more than anything. Jealous when you and Daddy left me home to go out to dinner with your friends.

Believing that you, too, liked Big Bird, as we sat watching Sesame Street. Feeling safe and warm, when you tucked me in at night. Walking clumsily in your shiny red shoes. Wondering why you and Nanny laughed so hard. Trying on your clothes that seemed so ridiculously large. Your long flowing dresses dragging on the hardwood floor, catching on sporadic splinters. I never thought I would fit into them. Now I, too, color between the lines, and paint my lips with that funny pink stick. And though I know your voice

> —Tina Greenberg, Age 16 Clarkstown N. High School New City, New York

isn't the sweetest in the world,

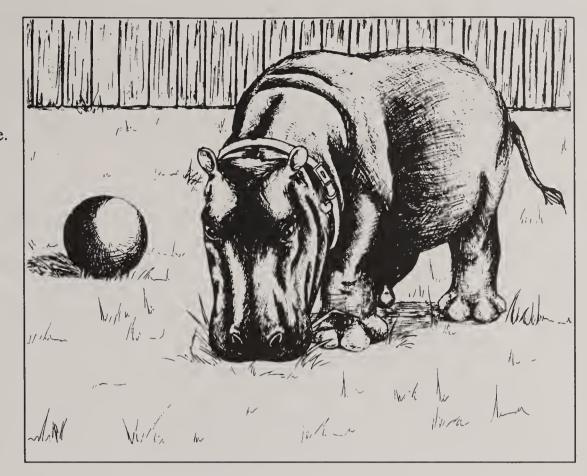
it's sweet enough, like the loving gesture

of an angel.

Hippo

I have a pet hippo, Weighs 90 tons more than me. He's really quite boring, as boring as can be. He won't fetch my slippers, he can't climb a tree. Oh, how I wish I had a pet flea-Jumping around, from cat to hound. They're not much work, just think of that. Or maybe, perhaps, I'd like a pet bat. They're really quite small. They don't get in your hair. They're easier to take care of than, Say, a bear. They never snore. No, I'd like something that can roar! But for now I have a pet hippo-Boring, as boring as boring can be, Oh, why did my aunt give a hippo to me?

> —Meghann Kuhlmann, Age 11 Placerville, California



Spiders

Hunting silently, Spinning their white silken webs, Going unnoticed.

> —James Ashe, Grade 6 C. Pierce Middle School Merrillville, Indiana

Universally Unified

We are the people of this world
Streams of life, merging into the great river
We can overcome the obstacles
Together.

We are the people of this world
Strands of energy, making the strong web
We catch the morning dew of peace
Together.

We are the people of this world
Rays of light, forming the universal sun
We can learn, teach, and forgive
Together.

We are the people of this world
Hearts of hope, pumping the powerful blood
We can create the melody of love
Together.

We are the people of this world
We are one, universally unified
We can conquer time
Together.

—Jennifer Linn, Age 15 Andrean High School Merrillville, Indiana

Falling Water

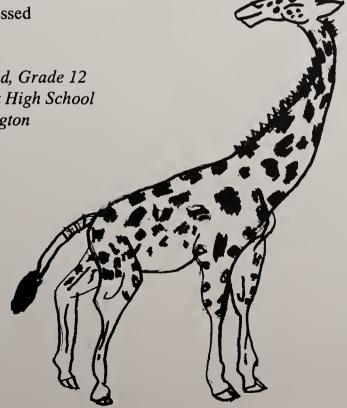
Watery thunder cascades across
The rocks and transfers its bolts to each
Victim it meets on its raging journey.

A castle of waves rises sky high. A piece of the water fortress Falls in mist as a drop on my hand.

Thunder melts into a silent pool,
And the castle is humbled into a remembrance
Of the power it once possessed
As falling water.

—Ingrid Lindeblad, Grade 12 Lewis and Clark High School Spokane, Washington

Illustration by Erika Fink, Age 12, Hammond, Indiana



DIARIES OF WHOOOOAA, THE GREAT CAVE PAINTER

by Brandon Deweese

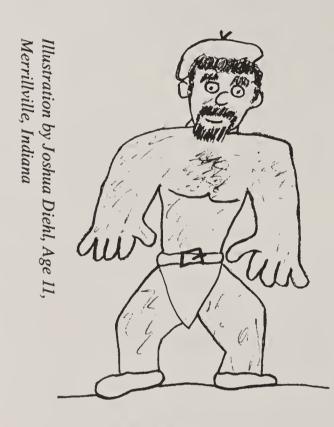


1/18/56,238 Caveman Time

oday was rather uneventful, except for the discovery of a cave that will be perfect for the village's next painting. I ordered two tool makers to prepare the necessary equipment for the painting.

I found a flat rock nearby and prepared a sketch of the hunt. I had Ooga and Booga, my assistants, find what would be needed to prepare the paint. They came back several hours later with the fooma (minerals) and turned it into a powder form. They also brought me some of the bison fat which will be used to wet the powder.

Later, the tool makers returned with what I needed—a brush made of a smooth twig from a tree with animal fur attached at one end, a stone lamp and a tray made of animal skin tied with vines to four bison bones.



1/15/56,238 Caveman Time

oday I woke up like the rest of the men in the tribe and began preparing to go on the hunt. We prayed to the god of hunting, and then ate in a small clearing just inside the forest. We ate berries that the women had picked yesterday and the small amount of meat which was left over from the last hunt.

After eating, we checked our spears to see if they were still in good shape, and then we left the forest and ventured into the plain beyond. After a few hours of traveling, we found a herd of bison on a small hill. We slowly approached the animals until they were in range of our spears. We killed three of them very quickly. It took us two days to haul the bison all the way back to the village.

After our arrival home, we cut the animals into pieces that will be used for many things, such as the meat for food, the skin to cover our huts and the bones to make trays and tools and weapons.

Illustration by Amanda Diehl, Age 13, Merrillville, Indiana



| 19/56,238 Caveman Time

oday I prepared the ceremonial masks that will be worn by myself and my assistants.

My wife had two children today, a boy and a girl, but the girl was stillborn. However, the boy, Whoaoaoa is in perfect shape and will help the village someday. It was a joyous time for all seventy-two people of the village. oday was the day of the pain ing. I awoke at sunrise and at I made final adjustments to the

1/20/56,238 Caveman Time

masks and the tools. Soon, Ooga and Boog arrived. They kneeled before me and placed their masks on their heads as the prayed to the god of slaves. Several minute later, after I had put my mask on, they wer on ahead to the cave to wait for me.

After a short time, I took my tray and lemy hut. When I arrived at the cave, I kneele in front of it while Ooga and Booga did the chant of good fortune. As soon as they fir ished, Booga took the stone lamp and cere moniously lit it.

We then went into the cave and walked for a couple of hours until we found the spot that the scouts had told us about. From my sketcon the flat rock, I began to outline the picture, copying it almost precisely Meanwhile, Ooga and Booga mixed the fooma and the animal fat to make the sacrepaint. With the brush, I traced the outlin with the paint and filled in the bison, spear and humans just a little. After I was done, prayed to the god of paintings to let this on last forever.

Then we left the cave. When we reached the outside, the village leader, Hooooch anded me his spear and my assistants raised their heads as far as they could. I thought fo awhile, deciding who would take my place as this had been my fiftieth and final painting. I then stabbed Ooga in the throat, and Booga lowered his head and prayed thank fully that he was the chosen one.

Tonight, I will go to an oak tree in the for est and take my life—as is the tradition o the cave painters. And I hope Whoaoaoa, my son, may one day become a cave painter too. But in any event, Booga had better be good painter or I'll come back and haun him for the rest of his life.

The preceding was translated from Cavemanese to English by the Deweese Institute of History. All rights reserved.

Brandon Deweese, Grade 11, lives in Hammond, Indiana.

Illustration by Brian Hunter Age 13, Hammond, Indiana

WORLD WAR II DIARIES

by Lisa Richards



April 13, 1943

I t's raining. And soldiers are everywhere. We're stuck in this cellar till it's safe. Mama is praying and Jimmy Boy is crying. Little Sally is sleeping for the first time in two days. Father is out trying to find food and clothing. I'm sitting in a corner writing. Sally's head is on my lap, her childlike face looking up at me. I look at the cellar door with longing. I haven't been outside in two months. Mama told me to resist temptation. She said if the soldiers ever find me I'll never see her again. Jimmy Boy has stopped his crying and has laid down, sucking his thumb. Mama rubs his hair as she continues with "Our Father." I look down at Sally's face and end the prayer with "Amen."

April 21, 1943

I t's been more than a week and father still hasn't come home yet. Mama is worried, although she tries to remain calm. Right now, she's outside taking father's job. Jimmy Boy and Sally are sleeping, although Jimmy cries in agony from time to time. I imagine how it must be for a three-year-old who has barely begun to grow. It's pretty frightening. I look up at the cellar door with worry and wonder if Mama is gonna come back.

April 28, 1943

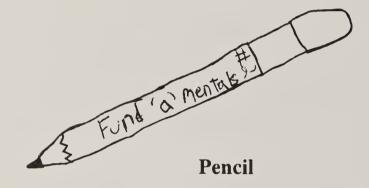
M ama didn't come back. And now, more than ever, I feel that both my parents are dead. Jimmy Boy and Sally ask me every now and then, "Where's Mama?" "Where's Daddy?" I don't answer because I feel I may start to cry, which somehow I have managed to avoid. Jimmy Boy and Sally are whining that they are hungry, and I ignore their cries. I haven't gone out for food for fear of leaving the children alone. A sudden noise stops the kids from further whining. I hear footsteps, loud and thunderous, as people move about in the rooms upstairs. Suddenly, the cellar door is lifted and a blinding light comes pouring into our small room. With my hand, I shield my eyes from the light as a man's face appears in the cellar-door opening.

Lisa Richards, Age 13, lives in Chicago Heights, Illinois.

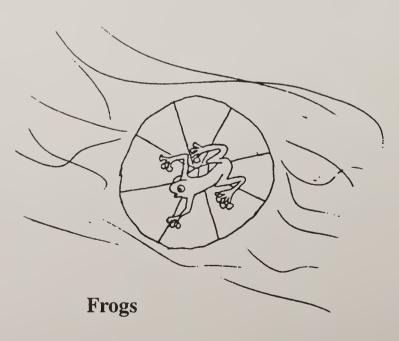


Tigers

Beautiful, endangered Beautiful, enuangered
Growling, stalking, hiding
I'm sad they're endangered.
Species

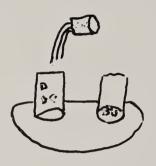


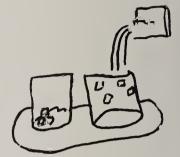
Sharp, pointy Writes, draws, erases Pencils can draw pictures. Wood



Slimy, ugly Jumping, hiding, green Frogs like to hop. Reptiles

Pop Delicious, good Popping, fizzing, pouring Pop tastes very good.





Poems and Illustrations

by

4th and 5th Graders

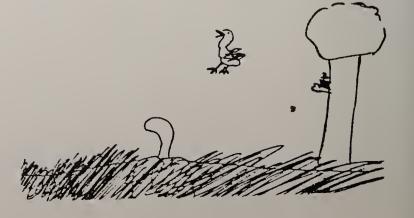
of J.W. Riley Elementary

Hammond, Indiana

Worm

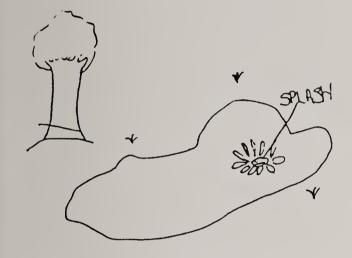
Gooey, sticky
Slivering, crawling, digging They are very gooey.

Centipede

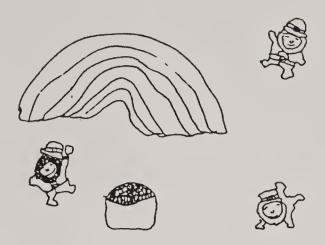


Water

Cold, clear Flowing, splashing, running Water is very cool. Liquid



- "Butterflies" by Megan Geurts
- "Lizards" by Krystal Kananowicz
- "Water" by Christina Larson
- "Frogs" by Sarai Lecea
- "Pop" by James Livengood
- "Tigers" by Kathy Maxcy
- "Leprechaun" by Amanda Nicksic
- "Worm" by Melissa Oller
- "Pencil" by Nichole Ondrick
- "Kittens" by Megan Varney



Leprechaun

Running, hiding, jumping
They are very small.

Lizards

Big, small Quick, colorful, long Lizards make you comfortable.

Reptiles





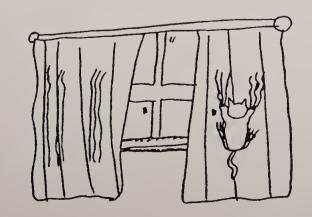
Butterflies

Graceful, colorful Flying, landing, eating Butterflies are very pretty. Insect



Scratching, playing, meowing They tear up furniture.





IS ANYONE THERE?

by Jennifer McCartney

flickering green light illuminates the little room. A lifeless shell, which once was a little boy, sits gaping at the box, which has become his world. A thin rivulet of saliva trickles from his mouth. It goes unnoticed, for his mind is far away, grappling with such matters as to what toothpaste gives the most protection against cavities, or which brand of potato chip is the crunchiest. Outside, the sun shines, but inside the curtains are drawn and no light penetrates the darkness. No natural light, anyway.

The sun shines upon an empty playground, and a lone squirrel scampers quickly across the dry gravel, as if nervous about treading upon the empty land. The sun beams upon the town's baseball diamond, now overrun with weeds. The wind sends a paper bag tumbling across left field. The library is deserted, for who will read a book when push-button entertainment is so close at hand? Where is the laughter? Where have the children gone? In one house, we find two little girls, restlessly playing with their dolls.

Illustration by Erika Fink,
Age 12, Hammond, Indiana

Their expressions of boredom are reflected in each other's eyes. One girl looks at the clock on the kitchen wall.

"I have to go," was the girl's remark. It was time for her favourite show. She shuffles down the road, so as not to be late. Such a sad thing to see. And so sad to hear, that instead of singing nursery rhymes, children sing jingles and theme songs. The box dictates to them and is relentless.

Only when the set is turned off and the children are sent outside to play, do we see their eyes slowly come into focus and begin to take in the wonders of the world. See how bright the colours are! And here how the wind speaks as it dances throughout the trees. Skipping ropes appear, and the squeak of the swings in the park echo through the town. Sugar-coated laughter is shared by all. Mudpies are made and clothes are dirtied, and parents remark on the change in their little boy or girl. How bright their eyes seem, and how many new faces have appeared in the last few days. And they say to themselves, it must be the weather.

If only they knew.

Jennifer McCartney, Grade 10, attends Ancaster High School in Ancaster, Ontario, Canada.



Hacker

Trapped in a wired world
So distant and far
Shrouded in secrecy
Yet open to all
With a sharp mind
They sneak in like weasels
Leaving only shattered remnants of what was and what should be
For the thrill of the hunt, capture, and kill
Yet little do they know that they are the prey
For the real hunters hide
Camouflaged in the unknown and unseen
Watching their prey like eagles
Waiting for mistakes
To swoop in and destroy the rodents
Who nibble at their garden of secrets

—Brian Jelinek, Grade 9 Memorial High School Eau Claire, Wisconsin



Writing Is

- ... A social contract between my brain and my hand.
- ...Potential energy ready to explode.
- ... A sonic boom of a plane when it reaches that point of no return.
- ...Many rivers flowing into a lake, like many ideas flowing onto my paper—trickle.
- ...The pain of getting a body-pierce, but the satisfaction of the aftermath.
- ...A killer on the loose, going all night.

—Jared Reber, Age 18 Lewis and Clark High School Spokane, Washington

Grandpa

Sometimes, when I am feeling really down, I go home early from school. I dress in my pajamas or my best friend's sweat shirt and boxer shorts, and I crawl down under my down comforter. I snuggle up into a little ball. just like when I was small. I close my eyes, but I don't sleep. You sing to me all of those songs you used to sing to me when I was little. Those songs on the Roger Whittaker album. He was your favorite. You were mine.

You were mine.
Your voice echoes
through my room.
The words are crystal clear.
Sometimes I forget
that you're not really there.

—Nancy Betzel, Age 17 Wheeling High School Wheeling, Illinois



Illustration by Sarah Hunter Age 13, Riverview, Florida

Serene Pain

I was sleeping In the corner of your mind, Knowing there's no place for me. Living with A broken heart, Feeling there will never be Tranquility with A loss of heart, Yet knowing From the very start, My life has found An empty space, And when I see the light, I turn away. My burning eyes Return into the night.

> —Marisa Rosato, Age 17 Casselberry, Florida

GERMAN INKWELL

by Erin Bluhm

never met Otto Bernstein, but I still considered him one of my closest friends. We shared stories, dreams, problems and a lot more. Otto was my German pen pal and best friend for three years. We met through a German exchange student, Steve, Otto's older brother. Steve always said that we were extremely alike. We had the same personality and overall look on the world.

Steve was nineteen and Otto was eleven at the time. I was ten the first time I wrote to him. We hit it off right away. He liked baseball, American football, and writing. In his first letter to me, I found out that he was born exactly one year and two days before me, had green eyes, blond hair and had already sprouted to five feet, seven inches. He had a sister who was fifteen and a baby brother who was seven.

I wrote him back and told him about myself. I have two sisters, sixteen and thirteen, and how I was interested in the same things he was. We wrote four or five letters back and forth before he told me one of our many secrets.

Otto was a very straightforward person, and that was how he let me know that he had AIDS. He wasn't scared or worried that he was going to die of AIDS. He never did tell me how he contracted the HIV virus. He told me that he had lived for eleven years and nothing had happened, so why start worrying now?

I guess I believed his little theory until he stopped writing. "He's dead!" was my first thought. What else was I supposed to think? I decided to write to Steve to find out the truth. He wrote back and told me that Otto had not died but was in fact very sick. Otto had gotten a cold from a cousin. This cold was worse than normal ones because his immune system was run down from AIDS. Otto had been in the hospital for three weeks. I was so worried that I wrote Steve back right away and told him to give Otto my love and my hope for a safe recovery.

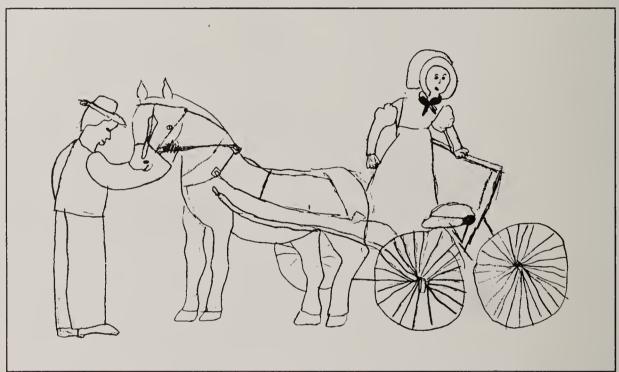
Otto got out of the hospital within two weeks of my last letter to Steve. All of this happened in September, 1993. It had been our second year of writing, and we had

grown very close, almost like brother and sister. In December I was asked to come to Germany for two weeks. But, of course, my mother, with her stern voice, said no. "It's too dangerous," was her latest excuse. Otto and I sure didn't think so, but my mother had spoken, and that was that. So Otto's coming here and my going there were both totally out of the question.

We never exchanged pictures, but we did exchange memorabilia. I received his baseare sorry that you will not be able to attend his funeral, for if you were here, it would mean the world to him. You meant the world to him, and I know he loved you like a sister and a friend.

I thank you again.

Yours truly, Gretel F. Bernstein, Family, and Otto



ball card that Steve got for him while in America, Otto's prized possession, according to Steve. He received my softball, the old, torn up one from my very first home run. Even though we never saw each other's face, I know I saw some of him in the card and, hopefully, he saw a little of me in the softball.

A good five months later I received a letter from Otto's mother, Gretel. I knew then that something terrible had happened. The letter read:

Dear Erin,

I know how much you meant to Otto and that is why I decided to tell you first. Otto has died on the 8th of May, 1994. He will be buried with a number of things including all of your letters, your softball, and some family things. The whole Bernstein family thanks you for making Otto's last couple years on this earth the best of his life. We I was devastated and honored at the same time. I was honored that Otto's family would put my things with him in the deep, dark box of his death. I cried for thirty-six hours, on and off, and when I finally came up for air, it hit me that I never got to see the features of his face, whether they were slim, dark, chubby, or so friendly that he could become friends with anyone in a second. He never got to see my outward appearance, either. Even though we never met face to face, both he and I knew what we were like, our dreams, our fears, our hopes and our goals. So, I guess we really didn't need to see each other's features to know each other's soul.

> Erin Bluhm, Age 14, attends Barker Middle School in Michigan City, Indiana.

grassstains

grassstains unrestrained rolling down the hills rolling round the bases rolling on home with muddy sneakers stamping footprints black on pale cracked sidewalks. I saw my spirit running up the cold cement steps through the screen door into the home where muddy shoes had to be removedremoved before entering.

and as the screen door swung shut my mother spoke of ballet classes and gracefulness. and so with pink ballet slippers I treaded lightly on the polished wooden floor. my fire seeped into the soft plush carpet of the dressing room where footprints made no impression at all and grassstains and baseball weren't ladylike and fingernails that shielded dirt and sand weren't ladylike and there were no longer grassstains

—Beth Resnick, Age 17 Clarkstown N. High School New City, New York

unrestrained.

Winter

Cold, blustery winds
Snow blowing, trees dying fast
Birds flocking for warmth

Friend

Forever loving
Sister-like caring, sharing
Stick like super glue

---Morgan Marovich, Grade 6 C. Pierce Middle School Merrillville, Indiana

Crown My Mind

In this maze, that thwarts my dreams My eyes can see what's true They know that destiny can lead to fate They know the you in you This image in the mirror Knows this soul doesn't own a heart That life is only pages Where love is torn apart My mind inside is dying From all the truths I've found I found a road to nowhere When the crying queen was crowned The spirit in me is screaming It's waiting for a light It's sending the moon a message Telling him to say good night

--Rosalind Weller, Age 16 Lewis and Clark High School Spokane, Washington



Illustration by Erick Sherman, Age 13, Hammond, Indiana

I've Done That Before

Red hearts mark important dates on the calendar. Soon to be forgotten. Replaced in the memory by a new love-of-the-week.

Torn movie-ticket stubs, crumpled and faded, kept in old dusty cedar trinket boxes. Paper flowers dingy-white, held together by used pipe cleaners. Once leaving a giddy feeling in the pit of the stomach. Now just a contorted memory of absent happiness that was never worth remembering anyway.

Piles of garbage that long ago meant the world—a child's view of a lifetime of happiness. That, soon after, only spoke for a broken heart that couldn't find a way to speak for itself again. Afraid of repeating the cycle of a little girl's concept of love.

—Renae Baker, Age 18 Wheeling High School Wheeling, Illinois

Hidden Jewels

Hidden jewels unveiled their brilliance to me on a warm summer night at the beach. The onyx sky shimmered with brilliant stars. The water reflected the luminous pearl moon. These moonbeams danced off the dark sapphire blue water and illuminated my love's deep emerald green eyes. Silver-capped waves crashed against the awaiting shore. Rumbling water filled the crystal air and added soothing tones to the silence. Golden grains squished between my toes. A cool breeze off the lake tousled his dark amber hair. He reached for my hand and pulled it toward his pulsating heart. I gazed into his sparkling eyes and saw the reflection of a diamond striking across the ebony sky toward the earth. "Make a wish," I whispered. His velvety lips parted and revealed his wintry teeth. He embraced my ruby lips with a soft, sensuous kiss.

> —Melissa Sopko, Age 18 Mt. Prospect, Illinois

BELIEF

by Ariel Huhn

A young woman stood looking across the still shore. The only sound she could capture was the steady lulling of the waves breaking upon the sand. It was then that she experienced a sense of knowing and familiarity—almost as if she had been there before.

There was a calm—a peace from the boisterous shouts that so often dominate the silence. The boundless stretch of beach, flattened by the moonlit waves, was broken by her footprints.

She closed her eyes, letting the sounds of the sea envelop her in memory and fantasy.

Maybe it was the seal who held out his flipper welcoming her into the ocean, or the gull whose shrill cries edged her nearer to the water.

As magic often works in mysterious ways, it can be brought on by belief. And perhaps that belief helped her legs entwine into the form of a graceful tail.

As dawn approached, each scale, radiant in the new light, was lured down into the depths of the sea.

Ariel Huhn, Age 12, lives in Jenner, California.



Illustration by Erika Fink, Age 12, Hammond, Indiana

The Sea

I saw the sea glint gold in the sun.
I saw it dance with grace and it was youth, though it was so old.
I saw the sea take the man who caught fish in the red and copper dawn of the day.
And still I felt love for the sea.

I see it now.
I see it as it swells
and falls with the beat
of the Earth.
I see it watch the
life on land
as it moves,
like a small gold bird who will fly
past the red and copper
dawn of the day,
as I clutch the hand
of youth
in my old age.

—Ellen Weiss, Grade 9
State College, Pennsylvania



"Woman According to Picasso," by Yael Eban, Grade 4, University School, Bloomington, Indiana

Raindrops

The rain won't stop
The drips just drop
They're all on top
Of my can of pop

—Ryan Marlow, Grade 6 C. Pierce Middle School Merrillville, Indiana

THE YELLOW FLOWER

by Amy L. Watt

teven Watters was faint with heat, dehydration and fatigue. He had been fighting since July 1st. He wondered what day it was now. He belonged to the 20th Maine. General George Meade had placed their regiment at the flank of the entire Union defensive line. The men positioned themselves on top of a hill called Little Round Top. The terrain was rocky and treacherous, but they had the advantage of being on top of the hill. The enemy had charged up the steep slope many times, and each time Steven wondered if the Union Army could hold it back. But by the strength and mercy of God, they were able to hold their ground.

It had been very traumatic. Steven had seen two of his best friends get shot, while nothing had even touched him. Tony had been shot in the head. Just a few hours before, they had been talking about how they couldn't wait to go home. Now, Tony never would. Aaron had been standing to Steven's left as they fought the Rebs. His left hand was already bleeding, and yet he kept on fighting. Never was there a braver soldier, Steven thought. Aaron had saved Steven's life by shooting one Reb who was about to shoot Steven. Steven had barely caught his breath when Aaron was shot in his chest and went down. Steven was able to catch his last words before Aaron died.

"Don't be angry, Steven. Fight for God."

Steven had wept for the loss of a friend. At the very end of the battle, when no ammunition was left, Captain Sherman maneuvered the army down the hill in a fashion resembling a door on its hinges. They swept down the hillside and captured the remaining Confederates. Steven admired the strategy in his captain's moves and thinking. If they hadn't held their position on the hill, then the Rebs probably would have gained access to the rest of the hill and then the entire Union line.

After that huge fight, Meade had thought it would be good to move their regiment to the very middle of the line, where no action would probably take place, so they could rest. Well, the next day, July 3rd, General

Lee of the Confederacy decided to aim his attack right there in the center. Cannons fired over and over. Steven and a few other men had been reserves. In case the Confederates broke the Union line, they were to fill in. For hours the shooting went on. Then, to their surprise, the Rebs started to march up the dead center of the field, toward Cemetery Ridge, right out there in the open!

The Confederate soldiers had been brave, but they had no chance. The Army of the Potomac fired cannons into the marching Confederates. Thousands fell. Only a few actually made it to the top, where Steven and the rest of Meade's men were waiting. Bayonets and rifles followed. That was when Steven got hurt. He was already exhausted by three days of intense fighting in stifling heat.

One guy had sliced Steven's arm with a bayonet. Steven could still see the Reb's young face. They were about the same age—eighteen or nineteen. His eyes showed fright for the almost inevitable death ahead of him. They also told of pain. Maybe he was homesick, or had a young sweetheart back home. As well, there blazed a look of honor and loyalty toward his country. Steven wondered if the boy were still alive.

The sun was beating down upon Steven now. His left arm throbbed. He wished someone would find him. Was he to die out here in this blood-sodden field just because he lacked the strength to walk? He certainly had the will to live. He tried to think of pleasant things, but the sound of cannon and guns echoing in his ears drowned out any agreeable thought. He almost wanted to scream. Steven decided to open his eyes. When he did, he almost died. Thousands of men lay scattered on the ground, as if they were pieces of trash, and not men at all. The stench was overwhelming. Some men groaned from different parts of the field; others lay with their eyes open, bodies still. Their chests were raised in a final breath death had overtaken before Pennsylvania's gently rolling farm land was now in ruins. The high stalks of corn, which had once been waving in the summer breeze, were reduced now to stubble. The fields of Gettysburg lay trampled by the feet of thousands of men and burned by the shots of cannon, which now stood silent and smoking.

Then Steven turned his head a little to the right. There, within arm's reach, was a single flower. It was yellow—the brightest, happiest yellow Steven had ever seen. How had this one flower survived all the hateful fighting of the previous day? Such a simple flower, and yet it poured out so much from its delicate petals. It had a will to live, just as Steven had a will to live. It had withstood the crimson fight and still endured; and, by God's strength, so would Steven.



He reached out his good arm and picked the small flower from out of the ground. Looking at it closely, Steven saw a strange thing. On one of the sunlit petals, lay a single drop of blood. Like Steven, the flower seemed to be bleeding, yet it lived on. He closed his eyes and held the flower. When next he opened them, two men were standing over him. They placed him on a stretcher. Before he drifted off into an exhausted sleep, he thanked the Lord for sending him the flower and for reminding him that just as He cares for the lilies of the field, so did He care for Steven, a wounded soldier on a wartorn battlefield.

Amy L. Watt, Age 16, lives in Coatesville, Pennsylvania.

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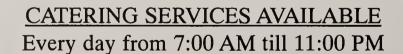


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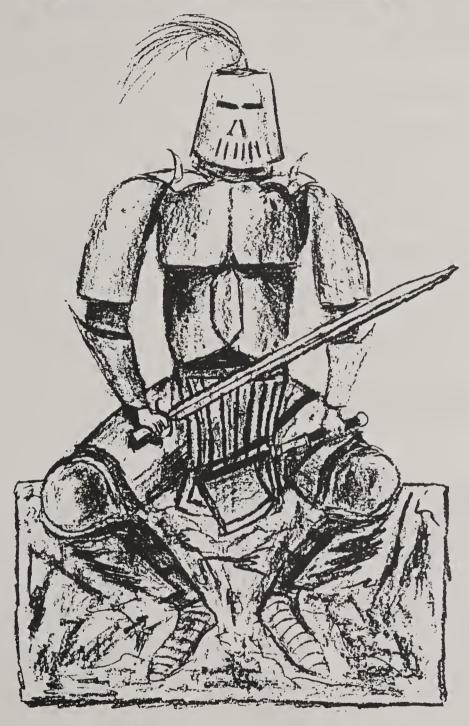
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		INTRODU			
	Page		Page		Page
Holt, Sara L.	1	Neebe, Kathleen	' 3	White, Henry	5
,		INDEX TO ANNI	IVERSARIES		
A CC C 1	02		89	Naca Tim	93
Acuff, Gale	92	Fasel, Ida		Ness, Tim	
Alahiyi, Donald	88,89	Grey, John	88,97	Rypma, Judi A.	85
Barnes, Daniel R.	98	Holt, Sara L.	88	Sergeyevna, Christina	
Borsenik, Dianne	89	Kaminsky, Ilya V.	96	Wisthoff-Wachter, D.	99
Carson, T. Anders	89	Mauch, Chris	91		
Coffee Friend	90	McMillan, Linda	91		
Correct Friend	70	· ·			
		INDEX TO BY I		D. 1	24
Beres, Michael	11	Grush, Olga	18	Prieto, Char	21
Birch, Judith Lee	9	Gutierrez, Jesus	27	Shannon, Ken	24
Bolinger, John	15	Kadow, Cathi	22	Sheehan, John	17
Cooke, Robert P.	20,27	Kamalipour, Y.	27	Strabavy, Donna	10
Eaton, Charles E.	18	May-Wing, Helen	20	Tatera, Agnes	18
Ewart, Tom	7	Morse, Evangeline	20	Topa, Beverley	8
· ·		Nalbor, Sally	10	Vertreace, Martha	10
Fowler, Sandra	10	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
Goldman, Dona Lu	18	Palm, Margie	16	Zabransky, Richard	24
Goldsmith, Sandra	8	Pennington, Lisa	10,27	Zimmerman, Joanne	25
Grimmer, Virginia	8	Peternel, Joan	15		
		INDEX TO POET	TRY & PROSE		
Babcock, Matthew	44	Harshbarger, Karl	41	Reynolds, Deborah	76
			70		73
Baggarly, Nicole	67	Hawley, James		Rich, Katie	
Berkowitz, Jonathar		Holler, Paul	69	Ruben, Laura	34,49
Blossman, Robert C		Jaffe, Daniel	~ 50	Shrader, Christine	34
Bourgeois, Louis	33	Jensen, Kristin	35	Snyder, Jon	45
Catlin, Alan	77	Khaiyat, Mahdy Y.	77	Stamper, Gordon	34
Coleman, Earl	38	Lee, Monika	38	Stedler, Harding	40
Deweese, Virginia	46	Lynskey, Edward	68	Stone, Lois Greene	77
Drakis, Barbara	76	Mauch, Chris	34	Tinkham, Charles B.	34,49,61
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	67	McDonald, Walter	39	Vogel, Constance	53
Egelston, Phillip		· ·			
England, Amy	40	Moran, Janet	78	Wallace, Brian F.	68
Farmer, Rod	53	Moritz, Shirley Jo	54	Webster, Diane	38
Fasel, Ida	53	Ortega, Vincent	33	Wheatcroft, John	40
Florence, Emily	77	Pagnucci, Franco	68	Wilson, Judy	81
Fox, Hugh	45	Paul, J.	71	Witte, Francine	39,44
Gentry, Bruce	39	Perchik, Simon	38	Yas, Joanna	56
Gottlieb, Arthur	77	Pionke, Albert D.	45		
Greenblatt, Ray	44	Reid, Paddy	29		
Orcenbian, Ray	77				
INDEX TO YOUNG WRITERS					
Ashe, James	103	Kuhlmann, Meghann	103	Ondrick, Nichole	106
Baker, Renae	111	Larson, Christina	107	Pacyk, Christine	101
Betzel, Nancy	109	Lecea, Sarai	106	Reber, Jared	109
Bluhm, Erin	110	Lindeblad, Ingrid	103	Resnick, Beth	111
Chapman, Roxann	102	Linn, Jennifer	103	Richards, Lisa	105
Claybourne, Larissa		Livengood, James	106	Rosato, Marisa	109
	104				
Deweese, Brandon		Marlow, Ryan	112	Sopko, Melissa	111
Geurts, Megan	107	Marovich, Morgan	111	Varney, Megan	107
Greenberg, Tina	102	Maxcy, Kathy	106	Watt, Amy	113
Huhn, Ariel	112	McCartney, Jennifer	108	Weiss, Ellen	112
Jelinek, Brian	109	Nicksic, Amanda	107	Weller, Rosalind	111
Kananowicz, Krysta	al 107	Oller, Melissa	106	Winston-Dolan, S.	102
		ÍNDEX TO G		,	
Avery, A. E.	72	freeman, jessica	21	Moritz, Shirley Jo	54
Birch, Judith	9	•		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
		Fritsch, Eric	109	Rhodes, Rhede	91,100
Crosley, P. E.	14,52-53,87	Hunter, Brian	47,105	Richards, Lisa	108
Deweese, Virginia	46	Hunter, Sarah	109	Sherman, Erick	111
Diehl, Amanda	102,104	Jensen, Sandra	19,50,55,84	Sherman, Jessica	113
Diehl, Joshua	104	Kingsley	93	Sherman, Lauri	8-9,22-23,40,71
Eban, Yael	112	Laughlin, Hannah	110	Shrader, Martin	33
Fink, Erika	103,108,112	Mitchell, Marianne	15,88	Wallace, Jaye	3
Fleming, Dale	5,6,17,24,26,35,41,	Monnett, Eva	1,38-39,89,99	Wilson, Stacy	103
<i>G</i> , =	61,67,81,96-97		_,00 07,07,77		103
	22,01,02,000				

For Robert E. Nichols, Jr.

you were like empire your work shone in the sun

you built palaces with words of sculptor's choice and mortared them with spirit's syntax

life,
whatever else,
was ritual
that culminated
in the sacred,
that called
for the devoted act,
that whispered to us
in figures
of the flower,
in distant hieroglyph
of the flight
of birds

you gave yourself to life and to your all-abiding faith in the meaning of the everlasting

you helped to keep the word alive

-Charles B. Tinkham

